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Guest Editorial

The Will to Question

OURS is an age neither of faith nor of unbelief. It is an age of bad faith, of beliefs maintained for lack of convictions that are genuine. It is the age of "useful lies"; of fictions consciously devised and consciously accepted, which take the place of the truth simply because they are easily made use of and are widely used, and which end by constituting a language in which even the truthful man finds himself trapped.

To be sure, the private individual in his daily life continues to preserve just that mixture of sincerity and hypocrisy which he considers needful to the conduct of his affairs. Individuals change little with changing events, and the proportion of good men and bad men, liars and truth-tellers, always remains about the same. But the nature of society does change, and affects the quality of the individual's relations with others. A society is not simply the sum of its individuals; nor is it the complex of juridical, political, and economic institutions. Basically, it consists of the beliefs by virtue of which members of a community agree or come into conflict. It is beliefs that are the connective tissue between individual consciences; and the vitality or inertia of beliefs is the surest sign of the vigour or corruption of a society.

For some time now a major segment—perhaps all—of the world has been living in a state of bad faith. The beginning of this time can be given a definite date. That date is August 2nd, 1914: the outbreak of the First World War. On this date there began the destruction of the only belief in modern times that had taken the place of religious faith—the belief in the progress of humanity.

THE belief in progress generally coincides with a belief in science and reason, though there is no necessary logical connection. Yet, paradoxically enough, belief in progress assumed the character of a definitely religious faith at the moment that man conceived the ambition to apply reason and science to society. What was religious in the idea of the inevitable progress of mankind was the confidence that a pre-established harmony existed between the order of the world and the hopes of man; that both were part of the same evolutionary process; in short, that natural history and human history were congruent, making up a single reality whose laws experimental reason discovered and practical reason applied.

This faith was not blindly optimistic. It suggested, not that things would necessarily get better and better, but rather that no pre-established limit could be set to the material and moral improvement of human affairs. Conflict, pain, and evil were inevitable, but against them man's will could always have the last word. Modern democracy was born of this faith in the victorious activity of man, and the religious form finally taken by the faith was socialism. Socialism, let us remember, did not spring fully armed from the mind of Karl Marx. Before that it was the faith of the humble, born out of their sufferings when, along with the iron laws of the industrial revolution, came the glad tidings that the social order was neither eternal nor divine, but could and should be the instrument of human reason and hence of human happiness.

Why did the First World War destroy such a faith? Can a faith be destroyed by a fact, no matter how catastrophic? Is it not its distinctive feature to withstand the shock of events? Yes—but only to an extent. While it is probably the most enduring of human things, faith like all human realities is exposed to death. The ideas, images, and hopes of which it is made up mark limits beyond which, when pressed, it

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dies. These limits are as hard to define as they are inflexible. But this can be said: faith cannot survive in long isolation from the real world whose vital principle it aspires to be.

The one fact that could doom faith in progress was war, which was in such radical contradiction to any notion of a non-catastrophic evolution of society or of the sovereign power of reason over events. Moreover, the First World War proved to be entirely senseless, waged at the cost of millions of lives for ends—the "rational" readjustment of borders and eternal peace—which were both petty and sublime, and in neither case achieved. Western society as a whole had been laid waste by a cataclysm which no political wisdom and no traditional belief could withstand.

Confidence in evolutionary progress can subsist so long as there is some proportion between the imagined goal and the actual results. But when the hopes are incommensurable with the outcome and when there is no relation between the ideal future and the undeniable present, what crumbles are not just illusions about the wisdom of particular rulers but the very roots of the faith itself.

FROM that day in August, 1914, not only the intellectuals but the whole of European society found itself in a state of nihilism: which meant believing that no belief could withstand *faits accomplis*. This state of mind easily became the ground for a dark decision: no belief is valid, all that is valid is the will to get things done: and belief or no belief, he who gets things done is right: better still, he makes his own right. This was the decision made by "men of action," and which led to what might be called the "ideological restorations" of 1914–53. Whatever was being restored, be it "socialism," "the fatherland," "the nation," or a mixture of these, the essential element was now the will to power. Reason, ideas, needs, and all genuine beliefs were made subservient to this will, whose only norm is expediency.

What has characterised these "ideological restorations" above all is bad faith. Products of the crumbling of collective beliefs, these movements claim to realise these beliefs absolutely, while refusing to be judged even by these beliefs themselves. The truth of the matter is that, to them, belief is simply irrelevant.

The clearest example of this is Communism. Communism arose as a radical reaction against the failure of 19th-century socialism. Its declared aim is to realise socialism completely: but in fact the old socialist faith has been emptied of its content. The two foundations of contemporary Communism as defined by Lenin are: first, that socialism is to be achieved by the will of an "enlightened" minority; second, that in action there is no ideal theoretical principle that should not yield to expediency. There is an essential contradiction between these rules and the traditional socialist faith. What matters for Communism is, not faith, but will.

It is not surprising that, in the absence of a genuine faith, a substitute is offered. For, while an individual who has doubts can stop and think, societies cannot. A community cannot live on doubt; it requires deeds, and in order to justify them it needs reasons, true or false. What has characterised our era has been the fact that the masses of people have been inclined to follow those who offered the grossest myths. People want to be deceived, said the Romans. Perhaps. But in that hunger for hope and faith which leads our modern masses to feed on fantastic fictions we must recognise the presence of human nobility, no matter how disfigured. These human aspirations are as worthy of our respect as the cynicism of those who deceive them is of our contempt.

But if intellectuals today have no right to accuse the people, there is a class of people whom they can and must judge—themselves. From the point of view of the community the only justification of the intellectual is that he persists, under the stress of circumstances, in being a free, conscious, reasoning individual when others lose themselves in the crowd. The duty that no intellectual can shirk without degrading himself is the duty to expose fictions and to refuse to call "useful lies," truths. To accomplish this duty, it is not necessary for him to think that he possesses the truth. The will to question can suffice.

Nicola Chiaromonte

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Melvin J. Lasky

A Sentimental Traveller in Japan (I)

FIRST impressions are the opium of the sentimental traveller. . . .

I dozed in my plane from Berlin. Next to me, closer to the small round window through which we could see little but the shining aluminium of the plane's huge wing, sat a Japanese fellow-passenger. He was a serious little chap, said hardly a word for the first two days, busied himself with his lapful of reading matter. Hour after hour he held grimly on to a *Lexikon der Politik*, pencil in hand, marking various passages. His intensity was a curious challenge. I dared not put away my *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, and dutifully underlined words and phrases (especially in the section on single-mindedness in Nippon). He shifted to the weekly news-magazine, *Der Spiegel*, and began to clip stories. I seized my *Economist* and concentrated on statistics. Thus for ten thousand air miles I read when he read, ripped news-items out of the local press when he did, exhausted myself in a romantic, useless effort to keep the West in the running. He completed, I estimate, one more book than I did, and at least a half-dozen more periodicals. We exchanged our first words on the Kowloon ferry, coming back from Hong Kong and our vain effort to discover if the Chinese New Year, which was being celebrated, dated from Confucius or Sun Yat Sen. He smiled and said simply, "Hong Kong has no history. . . ."

His whole family had come to greet my Japanese companion, and there they all were, clad in kimonos, two little girls and mother in charming coiffure—and each with a white mask over her face. The white mask was a gauze covering for nose and mouth, fastened over the ears and tied behind the head. Most all of the Japanese in the waiting-hall were so equipped. Tokyo, I quickly learned, was recovering from a severe flu epidemic. And ever since the coming of modern science and medicine several generations ago, the Japanese have borrowed from doctor and nurse in the surgical room the white mask. "How very Japanese," I thought, "this sense of personal discipline, of social obligation, the almost superstitious dedication to the ways of modern man!"

The sentimental traveller made his way from Haneda into town. . . .

THE trouble with the Westerner in the East is that he has been conditioned to error. Like one of Pavlov's dogs he hears a bell and reacts, but the whole thing may be only a trap, and he only an innocent victim. I kept on hearing bells in Japan, and was constantly betrayed. I saw a woman beyond a bamboo fence fondling a child, and I felt at once that this could not simply be mother-love, but must rather be some form of the hierarchical sentiment which prevails between the old and the young. When a newspaper editor told me of his troubles and stated passionately his determination to resist any encroachments on his journalistic independence, I suspected immediately that this was not truly a matter of democratic feeling for a free press but only a polite Japanese adaptation to the posture he thought I would like to have him take. For, we are told, out there is Eastern reality, and here our Western eyes, and they never meet at the point of an observed truth but only in distortion and misunderstanding. Without being able to help myself I came to call a thing strange where it was merely simple and obvious.

There is a natural bit of romanticism here, but also a very unnatural burden of mythology

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about the mysterious East, the inscrutable Orient, and the Japanese way which defies the white man's mind. I came prepared to find my land of the white masks. First impressions and last impressions were almost pre-recorded in the back of my mind. After my plane-time survey of Japanese life (with the aid of Ruth Benedict and others) I would not have been surprised, indeed I half expected, to find myself plunged into a world of thousand-armed Buddha-like figures dancing along lantern-lit garden paths. Anything but a woman's sense of mother love. Anything but a man's sense of liberty and dignity. Anything but a world in which traffic lights are annoying, appointments should be made a day in advance, and the sun breaking through a grey February day puts a smile on to a crowded busy avenue. Asia may be different, but it is not Mars.

But to see without the spectacles which we have fashioned for ourselves is not easy. In the first days, as I ran into the vigour, the modernity, the speed of Japan, could I refrain from thinking, "here are the Prussians (or, at the very least, the West-Germans) of the Far East?" Then I was trapped in non-functioning elevators in the Marounouchi, charmed by the literary cafés in Shinjiku, and I said, "Oh no, this is the France of the Orient!" In the countryside I saw the peasantry, sturdy, poor and proud, faces lined by centuries of hopeless struggle against nature, and I drove along new roads which were breaking down and sometimes disappearing into green fields, and it occurred to me: "the Yugoslavia of the Far East?"

These questions got their answer when a friend said, "You will learn soon enough that we are, alas, only the Japanese of the Far East. . . ."

For the first three or four days in Tokyo, wandering through the crowded streets, I looked for a ruin, a sign of the tragic devastation of the last war which had practically destroyed every large city in Japan. There were bright new office buildings in the flourishing business centre, and endless miles of little shops and traditional wooden-frame houses with their sliding doors and paper windows. The fire-raiding terror which led to the capitulation of September, 1945, left hardly a trace visible to the naked eye. Even the black-market poverty of the first three post-war years seemed to belong only to the past. The turning-point, as in the occupation of defeated Germany, came in 1948, and reconstruction was quick, vigorous and fantastic. Japan knew no "Soviet zone," and a unified nation soon recovered its urban and its rural patterns of life. Just a few kilometres from the Tokyo Stock Exchange, experiencing the biggest boom in its history, farmers clad in cloaks of straw were planting rice as it had been planted in these islands two thousand years ago. Peace and national independence had come, and if in many fundamental respects Imperial Japan was a far cry from the fanatical semi-feudal military dictatorship of a decade or two ago, it was recovering many of its traditional ways. Kimonos were coming back to the streets, and in the shops the rising sales of even the most expensive Japanese garments (albeit with Matisse-like colours intended to harmonise with red fingernails and bright rouge!) were taken to be a kind of resistance-movement against Western-style attire. One no longer sees the ugly *mompei* trousers, the sweaters and slacks, in which women went out with rucksacks to scrounge for food in the countryside. Gone are the little boys and old men who used to pounce after cigarette butts. Gone, too, are most of the strange fevers which accompanied the traumatic shock of an ancient empire conquered and occupied for the first time in its history. Nothing more can be seen of the "Dancing Religion," a short-lived Shintoist sect, which to the sad tunes of samisen music on street corners tried to find a new way to Nirvana. Nor of the once-flourishing "*PL*" sect, which searched for "perfect liberty" and sometimes, in its heretical forms, for "perfect love," charging only a small fee, but it was cheap, said a former member, if considered as the cost of dance tickets.

The fevers have given way to chills, the chill of the cold war. On top of the large Mitsukoshi building, the white, blue, red, and green flags were hanging in confusion. Since Mao sent his troops across the Yalu in Korea, there

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has been a "meteorological black-out" over the China mainland. Japan gets its weather from China, but no weather reports—at least not until the Japanese experts again manage to break the code of the Chinese weather-stations. On its western frontier, in Berlin, the Iron Curtain cuts a telephone line in the middle of a street: on its eastern frontier, in Tokyo, it censors the announcement of rain, or snow, or sunshine. (But Stalin to the last talked of "peaceful co-existence," and when he died there was a rush in the Japanese bookstores for his collected works. A thousand copies were sold each day for a week.)

ONE evening I sat with the writers of Shinjiku at their weekly meeting. The saké flowed freely. A novelist took off his shirt and jacket and did an imitation of a Korean song-and-dance. A poet, apparently in my honour, crooned something called "*Im Rosengarten von Sans-souci.*" Next to me sat a distinguished professor, who had told me that he was the translator of Goethe, Hebbel, and Rosenberg. "Rosenberg?" I asked incredulously. "Oh yes," he said with a laugh, pouring more hot saké into my little cup, "one had to. . . ." When the gaiety of the evening reached a high point, the professor turned to me suddenly with a very earnest look and asked, "You have of course *starup* in Germany?" Not quite certain what that might be, I thought it diplomatic to say no, with regret. The professor was crestfallen. In a few minutes he put the question again, and I began to be worried about my response. "No *starup*?" he muttered, with a touch of real surprise and even bitterness. When my friend H. hurriedly whispered an explanation of what *starup* was, I withdrew what I had previously said and told him, "Of course, of course!" The professor smiled happily. He seemed almost serene.

For *starup* (in English: strip) is the rage in Tokyo, and a dozen theatres each night put on performances before packed audiences of what must be an elaborate combination of America's Minsky's burlesque, Germany's *Schönheitstänze*, and the usual routines of Place Pigalle. For the old folks, for the traditionalists, it was a sad and outrageous thing, which could possibly be justified only on the grounds that somehow this, too, belonged to Japan's destiny-ridden imitation of the West. But if this did not even have the excuse of being Western? No wonder the poor professor looked crushed. *Starup* was bad enough, but a *starup* of their very own?—that was too much!

Needless to say, I proceeded the next night, and the night after, and occasionally thereafter —I had, after all, a formidable sociological problem on my hands!—to the Cony and Nichegeki to observe the phenomenon of strip-teasers in contemporary Japan. The spectators were stern and sober. Here and there, one made out some of the troops on leave from Korea: a G.I., an English soldier in red beret, a turbaned Indian. But this was not "for foreign consumption," and the Japanese sat intently in their seats, hardly even turning their heads when the dancing girls came down the runway. The jazz was hot, and the gowns, if any, were scanty. Each night was sold out. Were they enjoying themselves? Who knows? It is a very baffling thing. In Japan the naked body is not an erotic subject as in the West, and a woman's bosom certainly not. On every street there is the public bathhouse where bathing is mixed and in the nude. Is it exotic because it is taken to be "Western"?

STARUP is almost as unfathomable as *pachinko*. In Tokyo there are 5,000 registered *pachinko* halls. The prospective customer may be accosted by the girls on the corner, the so-called *pom-poms* (better dressed than even in Rome, more beautiful than even in Paris), but they rarely succeed in diverting a soul from the path to the indoor sport of millions. *Pachinko* is a kind of a pin-ball machine, which one occasionally finds in moderate number elsewhere in the world. Here there are tens of thousands of these little games, the tiny steel balls noisily propelled over nails which prevent the score from rising to a number which might win a pack of cigarettes or a bolt of brocaded silk. With the same intensity of the man in the first row of the Cony, the Japanese sportsman pits his luck and manual dexterity hour after hour against the *pachinko* machine. In the beginning, the owners of the halls, mostly shrewd Chinese

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businessmen, tried to lure customers by means of a *starup* dancer on a stage in the middle of the hall. But the men came in droves and soon the cry rose up that the poor girl was distracting them from the game.

It would seem that the pattern is inevitable: the tempo of night life follows the rhythm of day life. Where there is iron and steel, great cities with subways, million-handed trade and industry, there will also be the neon wilderness of noise and music, fun and sin, boredom and high, desperate spirits. The principles of Piccadilly, Montmartre, Broadway, and the Kurfuerstendamm would appear in our century to be as irresistible as once were the principles of the French Revolution. "It is regrettable," said my Japanese friend sadly, "that only disease is contagious, and not health. . . ." I would not want to dignify what is happening with the name of progress; but in the contact of cultures, it is the traditional which disintegrates and what emerges has always the same shiny newness. The Japanese now rush home from work, grab a quick bite, pick up the evening paper from the corner kiosk to glance at the headlines with the latest news, and just manage to get a ticket for the film at the local movie-house.

Everything closes at 11 in the evening on the Ginza. The little flower-girls then attack you with the persistence of Zero pilots; you already have three bouquets but in the swarm you discover more roses stuffed into your coat. It was for us still early and we hailed a taxi to call on a friend. Taxi-drivers in Tokyo have the speed and apparent skill of their colleagues in Paris but with an extra dash of Oriental abandon. This is possibly the only city in the world where the taxi-driver knows as little about streets, neighbourhoods, and addresses as the stranger. Within a week I was beginning to be able to shout forward instructions between the violent bursts of the horn, because I had noted the corner where a new six-storey building overshadowed a little Buddhist shrine and had marked mentally the point where the tramway tracks cut left in front of a farm-house. . . . Addresses are hard to locate, apparently because there aren't any. The streets have no names, and occasional numbers to be found on the bamboo gate have reference only to the time in which the home was built, the newly put-up 379 being next to the old stone villa 17 which survived the incendiary bombs. In the heart of the city the American authorities have superimposed letters and numbers on to the street grid (so that I could always find my way to 4th and Y), but in the dozen other conglomerated villages which go to make up the metropolis we had to resort to: "Do you know the house of K-the-writer-in-the-green-house-near-the-bridge?"

THE young man from the morning newspaper who had wanted to come to talk with me about "the situation in Europe" had, as everybody before him and after him, great difficulty in locating my room at the Hotel Imperial. What jokes old Frank Lloyd Wright played on unsuspecting guests! Walls and windows were built askew, corridors splintered into narrow lanes, floors divided into upper and lower halves, and special chambers were set into left-over corners of the roof where practically nobody could find them. But who would dare breathe a word of criticism?—had not the building been among the few surviving structures in the earthquake of '23? And was it not, for visitors, a distinguished piece of "Japanese style"? The Japanese themselves, of course, think of it as a distinguished piece of Western style.

The young man had never been beyond the Japanese Isles but his German was fluent and his questions about the German scene were remarkably provocative. It seems that a Japanese author named Shinohara had written a best-selling book about Germany; it purported to be an exchange of letters from German students, and the upshot of it, apparently, was that, hunted by the police, unable to find books, live decently, think and discuss and study in the vaunted tradition of European scholarship, the German student was fleeing the West—and finding refuge in the great Soviet-assisted institutions of learning located in the Progressive State of Eastern Germany. Evidently my impatient dissent was rather surprising, even newsworthy. I found my picture and a long interview the next day in the *Mainichi*—this

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was not, of course, disagreeable, but how much would I learn if I only talked about Berlin and Bert Brecht? I asked the young man of *Mainichi* in turn, to show me about his office.

The *Mainichi*, which is to say the "translated version" of the *Mainichi Shimbun*, is one of the four daily newspapers in the English language which I, like most foreigners in Tokyo, read each day. The *Japan News* is a morning tabloid, rather British in its emphasis; the *Tokyo Evening News* is an afternoon sheet which capitalises on the time-difference between Japan, America, and Europe to be up-to-the-minute with the news. The *Nippon Times* is the most formidable of all the papers, a well-edited, well-written daily that would be a credit to journalism in any country of the world. That this should be done by a Japanese staff for an English-reading circulation of seventy thousand subscribers never ceased to astound me.

For the *Mainichi* people their English daily is just a pleasant little sideline, and why not? They publish the largest newspaper in the world, over six million copies sold each day; they publish a weekly illustrated, a farm magazine, a women's magazine, an educational monthly, a literary review, not to mention publications in the field of sports, puzzles, and braille. The mere by-products of this gigantic journalistic institution—the wire reports of the Reuter's, Associated Press, and United Press news-agencies, the copyrights from the *Economist*, the *Manchester Guardian*, and the *New York Times*—are quite enough to put out an English-language paper which ranks among the best things to be found anywhere in Asia.

The prosperous gigantism of the Japanese papers is based, of course, on the high (almost perfect) literacy rate of the population, and the habits of voracious reading developed by an ambitious and resourceful people who wanted more than anything else to "catch up." In this, as in many other respects, they have become more Western than the West. The best (and impressively enough, the largest) of the daily newspapers—the *Asahi* with five million readers, and *Yomiuri* with four million, round out, with *Mainichi*, the Big Three—are serious, unsensational journals which make an intelligent effort to give the reader a picture of what is happening in the world. The average Japanese family takes two papers each day. As a result, the press has become a unique economic and cultural force in the country. One paper sponsors a whole baseball team, the *Yomiuri Giants*, and I witnessed its send-off from Tokyo for a tour of the playing-fields of the U.S.A. Another runs a musical agency, and Josef Szigeti and Walter Gieseking were currently giving concerts under its auspices.

I MUST confess that if this did not leave me breathless enough, I found myself gasping as the young man took me through the seven floors of the *Mainichi* plant. The expansiveness of it all contributed only a little to the impression. In the editorial department there were hundreds of phones, hundreds of desks, hundreds of reporters and rewrite men. In the picture department there were half-a-hundred Speed-Graphics nicely lined up, ready to be rushed out by photographers to a story. On the roof there were a hundred pigeons in the *hato bu*, the carrier department, ready to wing off to the provinces at forty miles an hour and return with a negative and a thin-paper dispatch in their metal tubes. On a nearby field there were *Mainichi* helicopters. . . . But, as I say, the real element of the fantastic about this whole enterprise was to be found on the fifth floor. In a corner of one of the large editorial rooms I saw six girls sitting around a huge desk, with about a hundred sharpened pencils at their finger-tips. Who were they? Writers? Secretaries? Stenographers? All of these. I was reminded that in Japanese the word for "to write" and "to draw" is the same, and these girls were among the country's calligraphic experts. At a respectable speed they were copying the ideographs of an editorial on "the crisis in the Yoshida cabinet" which had to make the seventh of their thirteen daily editions in Osaka, Moji, and Nagoya. The symbols were drawn on long strips of ticker-tape paper. These were then inserted into a telephoto apparatus, and a few minutes later there was a negative print available in the dark-rooms of the provincial editions. Of course! If there were no typewriters how could there be a teletype

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wire service? How could there be a linotype machine? And how in heaven's name did they manage to get out a paper at all? The enormity of the problem had first begun to dawn on me.

Most of a Japanese newspaper, which uses about 2,500 of the basic Chinese characters in the language, is still set by hand. I saw a number of newly invented monotype machines with four enormous keyboards which included some 2,200 characters. (Behind them there was a reserve room with several extra thousand of "difficult and rare characters.") But these are rather complicated by punched tapes and electrically-controlled automatic casting machines, and with a speed of 30 characters a minute did not appear to be too satisfactory. So it is that hundreds of type-setters rush about on the sixth floor, pecking into little boxes of type for each individual character that is going into the newspaper to be printed four floors below on the most modern rotary presses. This is again, in the phrase of the West, "very Japanese," the old and the new side by side, a timeless scramble of the ages of Gutenberg, Mergenthaler, and Marconi.

This, surely, was the touch of genius in the Japanese achievement, and I thought of it often as I browsed in Maruzen's book-shop (recommended to me as "the greatest East of Suez"), as I saw the million secondhand volumes in the stalls of the Kanda, as one saw in the trains—and even walking along an avenue!—young people and old, concentrating through their spectacles on the printed page of a book. That the Japanese, burdened as they are (in the words of one historian) "with the crushing weight of the most cumbersome of writing systems," should have mastered the techniques of a modern society, is a phenomenon which will never cease to prompt wonder. For the Japanese language is one of the few survivals of the pre-alphabet system of writing which was almost everywhere else outdone in the competition with the more efficient phonetic notations invented in the Near East. Do any of our own letters require more than four strokes? There are hundreds of Chinese characters with more than twenty strokes, and the symbol ("a monstrosity," a Japanese friend said) for the word "love" has twenty-five strokes. Because Japanese, unlike Chinese, is a language with highly inflected words, there was devised more than a thousand years ago a phonetic script named *Kana*. This, unfortunately, did not displace the complicated ideographs but was merely mixed with it. (And so I have learned to distinguish a Chinese newspaper from a Japanese, even without taking note of the pictures of Mao—in each of the Japanese headlines, next to the symbolic characters, there are a few fairly plain, simply drawn phonetic lines.)

If two thousand ideographs are needed to read a newspaper, something between five and ten thousand are necessary to give access to more sophisticated publications. For anybody to learn this language—and I am assured that this does not merely include interested foreigners, but Japanese school-children themselves—requires years of intense work before even the rudiments are mastered. I was surprised in Tokyo to find how few foreigners even make the attempt to speak Japanese, and the reluctance is not at all that of, say, a visitor to Paris. It is not a matter of being ashamed of one's accent as it grates upon the sensitive, impatient ears of a French host. In Japan either one speaks perfectly or one speaks not at all. There are thousands of characters but only some forty or fifty different sounds. The slightest uncalled-for shading of sound twists and distorts meanings. Nor is it very much easier when it is all down on paper, black on white. If each Chinese character has one or more Japanese pronunciations, most of the written characters will, as I am told, correspond to one or more (sometimes as many as six or seven) different words. Only the context can determine the proper reading of each character. Phrases have to be deciphered. Sentences are a puzzle.

"But I can teach you a whole vocabulary in about five minutes!" said my friend T., a Western businessman married to a Japanese woman. I laughed, in desperate unbelief. But it was true. For Japanese has incorporated in wholesale fashion words which have been brought to them by travellers, guests, and conquerors. In something more than

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the promised five minutes I was master of fifty words, beginning with *pan* for "bread" (which the Portuguese introduced three centuries ago) and ending with *besu-boru* for "baseball" (which an American outfielder named Lefty O'Doul exported as a new national sport, and in 30 years it had become that). *Ohne Uns* was the title of Shinohara's book on Germany, and in its transliterated form has become fairly popular in neutralist circles. Strange household items, from food to furniture, were also transliterated, mostly from the English—*teibaru* for "table," *bata* for "butter," *supu* for "soup," *garasu* for "glass," *mahtshi* for "match." A department store is *depato*, an apartment *apato*, tobacco *tabaku*. Among the students and intellectuals (called *interi* which is short for intelligentsia) a number of fashionable words have emerged, the most common of which is *apuregeru*! (So a student at the Imperial University told me that nobody reads Gide any more, only Sartre, for he alone was truly *apuregeru*, i.e. *après-guerre*!)

"If only the American occupation had forced us to reform our language," I was astonished to hear one Japanese editor say. "Our respect for the ancient sources of our culture is too deep for us, on our own initiative, to abandon the use of Chinese characters. A return to the pure phonetic writing as it existed around the year 1000 would be a change for the better. Or even better still, the adoption of the Latin alphabet." Many foreign scholars agree. Prof. Reischauer states: "It would be a tremendous undertaking, but in the long run probably well worth the attempt."* For, according to grammarians, spoken Japanese can be perfectly written with only seventeen letters and one or two diacritical marks!

But all this, in the present circumstances, would seem to be just so much idle speculation. The use of the Latin alphabet, known in Japan as *Romaji* ("the Roman letters"), is actually on the wane, and in the traditionalist spirit of the country today officials are even making absurd efforts to complicate that convenient device. One afternoon I was puzzled by a headline in the *Tokyo Evening News* which announced: "NEW LOOK FOR MOUNT HUZI." That morning a Government Ministry had made the decision to abandon the so-called Hepburn system of *Romaji*, wherein Japan's celebrated snow-peaked mountain was known the world over as *Fuji*, and to turn the clock back to 1937 and the *Nippon-siki* method of romanizing Japanese words. Thus *Fuji* would become *Huzi*, the *Dai Ichi* building would become *Dai Iti*, and all signs in railroad stations would be changed accordingly. But Japan has a passion for the troublesome. Nothing, you see, is simple in Japan, nothing is easy.

AN evening with a number of "old Japan hands" had initiated me into the traditional long-raging disputation among Western observers of Japanese life and culture: Was this people and this society a fundamentally "imitative" one or a fundamentally "original" one? For my own part, and in my own ignorance, I cared little which they were. In the course of the evening someone set a bottle of beer before me, *Asahi* beer, first brewed some sixty years ago by visiting Bavarians who imparted the secrets of barley and hops, and since that time manufactured by the Japanese themselves. The beer, I thought, was not "original," but it was surely not an imitation, for it was delightfully superior to most of the beverages of Europe or America.

I had the address of a famous Japanese factory, and the next morning I set out to see the original imitators at work in the buildings of *Nippon Kogagu K. K.* Only thirty or forty years earlier there had been almost nothing out here, except a little wooden-frame house along a dirt road in Shinagawa. Then came a certain Dr. Lange from Zeiss in Germany, and in one

* Here, too, Japan has a head start of centuries over most of the rest of Asia. In Rangoon I spent an instructive afternoon talking with the scholars of the Burma Translation Society who, between fanning themselves and sipping orangeade through straws, were busy creating new words in their language. The young nation is today a Marxist state, but the word for "revolution" is still the old-time *tawh-lanchin* which means "people against the king." In the most literal sense their history is only beginning, for they have just invented the Burmese word for history! The ancient designation, *yarsawin*, meant "chronicle of Kings"; the new word, *neingadha-meing*, stands proudly for "the story of a country."

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generation the Japanese had a glass factory and a production of optical lenses, microscopes, and cameras, which they claimed with characteristically fierce pride was second to none in the world. "Didn't you know," Director Noboru Hamashima said, "that we made the greatest rangefinders ever put on a battleship during the last war?" Yes, I had heard that, but a couple of B-29's had destroyed the *Musashi* and *Yamato* warships in Philippine waters, and how was one really to know? I sipped only a few drops of the bitter green tea and looked around the office with its old desks, broken closets, and simple wooden chairs, and thought of what I would have found in, say, Düsseldorf. Hamashima accepted the challenge, and took me through the plant.

There was nothing impressive anywhere. The corridors were dark and murky, and the work-rooms crowded with what Hamashima simply called "very dexterous" young men and women, hand-polishing hundreds of lenses. Outside in the yard some boys were playing ping-pong, and girls were squeaking gaily in a game of volley-ball. Piles of glass blocks were lying outside a warehouse, mostly rejected raw material. Each worker in the plant stopped and bowed deeply as we passed by. Two women sat on a table in a corner, pushed their white masks up from their nose and mouth, quickly gobbled down some fish and seaweed sandwiches, and hastily restored their masks to position, obviously before the flu germs could make their attack. All this was nice and curious, but certainly no suspicion had yet been prompted within me that science and industrial techniques had here reached a new world high.

Finally, we stopped in the laboratory and control room where *Nippon* products were given their last check. "That is a Leica, no?" Hamashima said, pointing to the camera slung on my shoulder. "May we put it through our tests?" He took the apparatus carefully apart. He explained the principles of acceptance and rejection. He pointed to the charts listing various minimum standards. He outlined the virtues and vices of Sonnar and Summitar and Schneider-Kreuznach, as well as French, American, and Swiss equipment. Needless to say, my Leica failed on all counts. And a Contax that was also submitted in the running also fell behind the Nikkor lens, the feature of the new Japanese 35-mm. camera. "We are sorry, very sorry," Hamashima said, with a tone that was almost genuinely contrite. "Have we embarrassed you? It could not be helped. We are now, you see, the best in the world."

I went back that noon for lunch at the Foreign Correspondents' Press Club, and I put my doubt and questions to the professionals. It seems that there had been a young boy with a camera in Korea who ran around taking pictures where his elders either waited for better light or adjusted for flash. The results of his daring were some of the sharpest negatives ever seen. The photographers of the illustrated weeklies of France, England, and the U.S.A. took a quick look at the name of the lens and dashed off for the factory which made them. Among the pilgrims were David Duncan and Carl Mydans, the famous war photographers of *Life* magazine. "The pictures we made for our exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art," says Duncan, "are causing a minor revolution in the photographic world. . . ."

I am not writing an advertisement and certainly do not mean to throw the fear of *Nippon* into the hearts of the camera dealers of the West. But perhaps superior imitation is, in the Orient or elsewhere, a better thing than poor first-come originality.

(*The second part of this article will appear in the December number.*)

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W. H. Auden

The Willow Wren and the Stare

A starling and a willow wren
In a may-tree by a weir
Saw them meet, and heard him say;
"Dearest of my dear,
More lively than these waters chortling
As they leap the dam,
My sweetest duck, my precious goose,
My white lascivious lamb."
With a smile she listened to him
Talking to her there.
"What does he want?" said the willow wren,
"Much too much," said the stare.

"Forgive these loves who live in me,
These brats of greed and fear,
The honking bottom-pinching clown,
The snivelling sonneteer,
That so, between us, even these,
Who till the grave are mine,
For all they fall so short of, may,
Dear Heart, be still a sign."
With a smile she closed her eyes,
Silent she lay there.
"Does he mean what he says?" said the willow wren,
"Some of it," said the stare.

"Hark! Wild Robin winds his horn
And, as his notes require,
Now our laughter-loving spirits
Must in awe retire
To let their kinder partners,
Speechless with desire,

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Go in their holy selfishness
  Unfunny to the fire."
Smiling, silently she threw
  Her arms around him there.
"Is it only that?" said the willow wren,
  "It's that as well," said the stare.

Waking in her arms he cried,
  Utterly content;
  "I have heard the high good noises,
  Promoted for an instant,
Stood upon the shining outskirts
  Of the Joy I thank
For you, my dog, and every goody."
  There on that grass bank,
She laughed, he laughed, they laughed together,
  Then they ate and drank.
"Did he know what he meant?" said the willow wren,
  "God only knows," said the stare.

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Fourteen Letters

LETTERS TO J. B. YEATS

Editor's Note:—John Butler Yeats (1839–1922) had gone on a visit to America in 1908, and found life there so much to his liking that he refused all invitations to return to Ireland and remained in New York till his death, painting portraits, writing, and lecturing. W. B. Yeats, of course, saw him from time to time when lecture tours took him to America, and they corresponded frequently. Yeats carefully preserved his father's letters, at one time sending them to a typist to be deciphered, his own eyesight not being adequate to the task; two small books of excerpts from the letters were issued by Elizabeth C. Yeats's Cuala Press; and a delightful volume of *Letters to his son W. B. Yeats and others* was edited by Joseph Hone and published in 1944. Unfortunately, comparatively few of Yeats's letters to his father are known still to exist, some of them in fragmentary form. Enough, however, have survived to show how greatly he enjoyed their interchange of ideas and how highly he valued his father's wisdom. Writing to his friend Mrs. Shakespear in 1922 he said "I find it hard to realize my father's death, he has so long been a mind to me, that mind seems to me still thinking and writing."—ALLAN WADE.

at Coole Park
Gort,
Co. Galway.

August 7 [? 1909]

My dear Father:

I have been here for about two weeks now —at first we were at Burren, a seaside place in Clare. There has been so much theatre correspondence of late that I have kept putting off writing to you. It always takes me some time before I get a manageable system of work. My ideal is, I work at my play from 11 to 2, and then do letters, criticism and so forth from 3 to 5. Then I go to fish or walk. I have at last begun the putting of my play for Mrs. Campbell into verse.* Up to this I have been constructing it in prose, a most weary business. I have finished an essay on "tragic drama" which is to be the introduction to a new edition of my plays. Craig is doing stage designs for the edition. I have written half an elaborate essay on Synge, an analysis of Irish public opinion and the reason why his work is so much hated in Ireland. It is in practice a summary of the last fifty years in Ireland. But of course nearly all my thoughts are on my long play of which a great deal will be in rhyme. My theme is that the world being illusion, one must be deluded in some way if one is to triumph in it. One of the characters says

"Queens that have laughed to set the world at ease,
Kings that have cried 'I am great Alexander
Or Caesar come again' but stir our wonder
That they may stir their own and grow at length
Almost alike to that unlikely strength.
And those that will not make deliberate choice
Are nothing, or become some passion's voice,
Doing its will, believing what it choose."

Your friend Brooks came to see me and I liked him very much. I also asked another

* This was *The Player Queen* which had been more or less commissioned by Mrs. Patrick Campbell. It was planned as a tragedy in verse, and Yeats worked on it for several years without being able to finish it to his satisfaction. Eventually, on the advice of Ezra Pound, he turned it into a fantastic comedy in prose.

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American under the impression he was your man and did not like him at all. I had also made much of him at the theatre under this delusion. His aim in life was to persuade poets to give up saying "the firm earth," the "unmoving earth," etc., because as it goes round the sun it should be "moving" and "infirm."

I was delighted with your letter insisting on "intimacy" as the mark of fine literature. The contrary thing to this intimacy, which is another name for experience, life, is I believe "generalization." And generalization creates rhetoric, wins immediate popularity, organizes the mass, gives political success, Kipling's poetry, Macaulay's essays and so on. Life is never the same twice and so cannot be generalized. When you go from an Irish country district, where there are good manners, old songs, old stories and good talk, the folk mind, to an Irish country town, generalization meets one in music-hall songs with their mechanical rhythm, or in thoughts taken from the newspapers.

There is a chance of the Abbey players going to New York, and if they do I may have to go to[o] though I hope not. We are now waiting the final decision of the New York manager.

Yours

(Dictated) Fairfield
February 16th 1910 Glasnevin

My dear Father,

I got your letter just after I had taken charge of the Abbey again and as I was setting out on a very busy period, that is why I have not answered you before. I thought your letter most wonderful, it came at the moment when I was busy with an almost similar problem and it clarified my thought a great deal, in fact I may read some of it—I conclude you will not mind—at the end of a lecture I am to give in a private drawing room in London next month. The lecture is on Contemporary Poetry, a vague name chosen before I knew what the lecture was going to be about. I am describing the group of poets that met at the Rhymers' Club, more especially Ernest Dowson. The doctrine of the group or rather of the majority of it was that lyric poetry should be personal. That a man should express his life and do this without shame or fear. Ernest Dowson did this and became a most extraordinary poet, one feels the pressure of his life behind every line as if he were a character in a play of Shakespeare's. Johnson had no theories of any sort but came to do much the same through the example of Dowson and others and because his life grew gradually so tragic that it filled his thoughts. His theory was rather impersonality so far as he had any, I should say. In poetry the antithesis to personality is not so much will as an ever growing burden of noble attitudes and literary words. The noble attitudes are imposed upon the poet by papers like the *Spectator* and any

[*The rest of this letter is missing.*]

(Dictated) Abbey Theatre
February 23rd 1910 Dublin

My dear Father,

I have just finished dictating a first sketch of my lecture in London, it is on the dialect drama with Synge as the principal figure. All three lectures have worked themselves out as a plea for uniting literature once more to personality, the personality of the writer in lyric poetry or with imaginative personalities in drama. The only ground on which I differ from you is that I look upon character and personality as different things or perhaps different forms of the same thing. Juliet has personality, her Nurse has character. I look upon personality as the individual form of our passions (Dowson's in his poetry or Byron in *Manfred* or Forbes-Robertson in a romantic part have all personality but we do not necessarily know much about their characters.) Character belongs I think to Comedy, but all that's rather a long story and is connected with a whole mass of definitions.

I probably get the distinction from the stage, where we say a man is a "character actor" meaning that he builds up a part out of observation, or we say that he is "an emotional actor" meaning that he builds it up out of himself, and in the last case—we always add if he is not commonplace—that he has person-

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ality. Of course Shakespeare has both because he is always a tragic comedian.

In the process of writing my third lecture I found it lead up to the thought of your letter which I am going to quote at the end. It has made me realize with some surprise how fully my philosophy of Life has been inherited from you in all but its details and applications. What I want you to tell me

[*The rest of this letter is missing.*]

August 5 1913 — 18 Woburn Buildings, Upper Woburn Place, W.C.

My dear Father:

I thought your letter about "portraiture" being "pain" most beautiful and profound. All our art is but the putting our faith and the evidence of our faith into words or forms and our faith is in ecstasy. Of recent years instead of "vision," meaning by vision the intense realization of a state of ecstatic emotion symbolized in a definite imagined region, I have tried for more self portraiture. I have tried to make my work convincing with a speech so natural and dramatic that the hearer would feel the presence of a man thinking and feeling. There are always two types of poetry—Keats the type of vision, Burns a very obvious type of the other, too obvious indeed. It is in dramatic expression that English poetry is most lacking as compared with French poetry. Villon always and Ronsard at times creates a marvellous drama out of their lives.

I wonder if I may put together for Cuala a volume of criticism and philosophy extracted from your letters and lectures? It would help Cuala and be a most beautiful book. Are you writing the autobiography now that a magazine has asked for it? I think you would write it better in the way I said, for you would be free of the editorial criticism, but I am grateful for anything that sets you to the doing of it.

I have had wonderful "psychic" evidence of late. A charming girl I know, very simple and pious, a girl of good family, has developed automatic writing of the most astounding type. She only knows English and a little French but writes, in her mediumistic state, Greek, Latin, Italian, Chinese, Provençal, Hebrew, and other languages; she answers mental questions in Greek. The case cannot be published but I am examining it carefully with the help of British Museum language experts and writing a report as elaborate as if for publication. Various spirits have also been written through her hand and given their names and the dates of their deaths, etc. I have in every case been able to verify their statements, though sometimes only after long research. In no case have I ever heard of their existence. I know all the rationalist theories, fraud, unconscious fraud, unconscious action of the mind, forgotten memories, and so on and have after long analysis shown that none can account for this case; and I have just had a certificate of caution from a well-known American medium who has turned me out of her séances because she says "nothing ever satisfies" me. I am now elaborating a curious theory of spirit action which may I believe make philosophic study of mediums possible. I am really absorbed in this for the moment.

I cannot write more now, I have a huge pile or letters—a daily plague—to deal with. Next winter I am taking a secretary* though I shrink from the expense, believing that I shall be able to bear the expense because I shall be able to write. When my sec comes at the end of October you will find me a better correspondent as he will answer the business letters.

Yours affectionately

(Dictated) — Stone Cottage, Coleman's Hatch, Sussex

My dear Father

I am down here in Sussex, as you see. Ezra Pound and his wife are staying with me, we have four rooms of a cottage on the edge of a heath and our back is to the woods. I was amused by your description of Crowley. Crowley is not a man I appreciate. I am amused to find that he now praises Mrs. MacGregor, he slandered her in a very cruel way in one of

* The secretary was Ezra Pound.

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his books but I suppose Bergson's sister is now worth considering. I am sorry Quinn has taken up with Crowley.

I have just started to read through the whole seven vols of Wordsworth in Dowden's edition. I have finished the *Excursion* and begun the *Prelude*. I want to get through all the heavy part that I may properly understand the famous things. At the same time I am not finding the long poems really heavy. Have you any impressions of him? He strikes me as always destroying his poetic experience, which was of course of incomparable value, by his reflective power. His intellect was commonplace, and unfortunately he has been taught to respect nothing else. He thinks of his poetical experience not as incomparable in itself but as an engine that may be yoked to his intellect. He is full of a sort of utilitarianism and that is perhaps the reason why in later life he is continually looking back upon a lost vision, a lost happiness.

I have just got your last letters back from the typist; as always they interest me very much. I am thinking out a long poem, a conversation upon philosophical subjects between a duellist and a gambler.* There will be a wild comedy setting, but some of the thoughts will be those you discussed in letters to me a year ago. I take the duellist and the gambler as two contrary principles of life, and my gambler is your American woman. I wonder will you have seen Lady Gregory, or is she somewhere a thousand miles from New York? She hadn't her list of lectures before she left. I saw Lily the other day and read her the greater portion of my memoirs but Lolly is not to know this, as it would make her jealous. Lily approved the memoirs, and so you may judge from that I have not been too indiscreet.

Yours affectionately

March 14 [? 1916] 18 Woburn Buildings W.C.

My dear Father:

The typist has just sent me a letter of yours dated Feb 12. I had not noticed when it came that you asked me a question. You ask for examples of "imitation" in poetry. I suggest that the corresponding things are drama and the pictorial element and that in poetry those who lack these are rhetoricians. I feel in Wyndham Lewis's Cubist pictures an element corresponding to rhetoric arising from his confusion of the abstract with the rhythmical. Rhythm implies a living body, a breast to rise and fall or limbs that dance, while the abstract is incompatible with life. The Cubist is abstract. At the same time you must not leave out rhythm and this rhythm is not imitation. Impressionism by leaving it out brought all this rhetoric of the abstract upon us. I have just been turning over a book of Japanese paintings. Everywhere there is delight in form, repeated yet varied, in curious patterns of lines but these lines are all an ordering of natural objects though they are certainly not imitation. In every case the artist one feels has had to *consciously* and deliberately arrange his subject. It was the impressionists' belief that this arrangement should be only unconscious and instinctive that brought this violent reaction. They are right in believing that this should be conscious but wrong in substituting abstract scientific thought for conscious feeling. If I delight in rhythm I love nature though she is not rhythmical. I express my love in rhythm. The more I express it the less can I forget her.

I think Keats perhaps greater than Shelley and beyond words greater than Swinburne because he makes pictures one cannot forget and sees them as full of rhythm as a Chinese painting. Swinburne's poetry, all but some early poems, is as abstract as a cubist picture. Carlyle is abstract—ideas, never things or only their common worn out images taken up from some preachers, and to-day he is as dead as MacPherson's *Ossian*. Insincere and theatrical, he saw nothing. His moral zeal cast before his mind perpetually "God," "Eternity," "Work," and these ideas, corresponding to no exact pictures, have their analogy in all art which is without imitation. I doubt if I have made myself plain. I separate the rhythmical and the abstract. They are brothers but one is Abel and one is Cain. In poetry they are not

*Mrs. Yeats has been unable to find any poem answering this description; possibly it was never written.

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confused for we know that poetry is rhythm, but in music-hall verses we find an abstract cadence, which is vulgar because it is apart from imitation. This cadence is a mechanism, it never suggests a voice shaken with joy or sorrow as poetical rhythm does. It is but the noise of a machine and not the coming and going of the breath.

It is midnight and I must stop.

Yours.

I am back again in London.

TO H. J. C. GRIERSON

Sir Herbert Grierson was an old friend of Yeats's and while Professor of English Literature at Aberdeen University had been his host when Yeats was lecturing there on the night when the first production, in January, 1907, of J. M. Synge's *Playboy of the Western World* provoked a riot at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. In 1912 he had sent Yeats his monumental edition of *The Poems of John Donne*, and in 1924 his *Background of English Literature*. In another letter Yeats said he was "one of the few scholars with whose work I never quarrel."—A. W.

Nov 14 [1912] Coole Park
Gort
Co. Galway

DEAR Prof Grierson:

I write to thank you for your edition of Donne. It was very generous of you to send it to me. I have been using it constantly and find that at last I can understand Donne. Your notes tell me exactly what I want to know. Poems that I could not understand or could but understand are now clear and I notice that the more precise and learned the thought the greater the beauty, the passion; the intricacy and subtleties of his imagination are the length and depths of the furrow made by his passion. His pedantry and his obscenity—the rock and the loam of his Eden—but make me the more certain that one who is but a man like us all has seen God.

I would have written before but I have been ill—a combination of rheumatism and nervous indigestion—and am indeed still rather weak. I do not like however to delay longer about thanking you for work that has given me and shall give me I think more pleasure than any other book I can imagine. I came here a couple of days ago to get well in the quiet of the country. I shall fish for pike and plan out poems.

Yours

I find it difficult to believe from the evidence you give that Donne was not the lover of Lady Bedford. You I notice still doubt it but as George Moore would say "I hope for the best." The poem written on the supposition of her death, if it indeed refers to her, seems to me conclusive. No courtly compliment could go so far, no courtly beauty accept such compliments—and then he thinks her dead and so may well speak out.

February 21 [1926] 82, Merrion Square, S.
Dublin.

My dear Prof Grierson:

I have long put off writing to thank you for *The Background of English Literature* but my procrastination has not meant any lack of liking. I have had your book at my bedside for weeks and have read it very constantly. I am particularly indebted to you for your essay on Byron. My own verse has more and more adopted—seemingly without any will of mine—the syntax and vocabulary of common personal speech. The passage you quote—that beginning "our life is a false nature" down to almost the end of the quotation where it becomes too elaborate with "couch the mind,"* and a great part of the long passage

* *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Canto IV, Stanzas 126–127. The words "couch the mind" should be "couch the blind." The word is misprinted in *The Background of English Literature*.

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about Haidée*—I got a queer sort of half dream prevision of the passage the day before your book came with a reiteration of the words "broad moon"—are perfect personal speech. The over childish or over pretty or feminine element in some good Wordsworth and in much poetry up to our date comes from the lack of natural momentum in the syntax. This momentum underlies almost every Elizabethan and Jacobean lyric and is far more important than simplicity of vocabulary. If Wordsworth had found it he could have carried any amount of elaborate English. Byron, unlike the Elizabethans though he always tries for it, constantly allows it to die out in some mind-created construction, but is I think the one great English poet—though one can hardly call him great except in purpose and manhood—who sought it constantly. Blunt, though mostly an infuriating amateur, has it here and there in some Elizabethan-sounding sonnet and is then very great. Perhaps in our world only an amateur can seek it at all—unless he keeps to the surface like Kipling—or somebody like myself who seeks it with an intense unnatural labour that reduces composition to four or five lines a day. In a less artificial age it would come with our baby talk. The amateur has the necessary ease of soul but only succeeds a few times in his life.

I have been reading your ~~don~~ Donne again—I have just spelt him "done," that is because I have been writing the material version of a chorus for a version of Oedipus intended for the stage and my faculties have gone to the deuce—especially that intoxicating "St. Lucies Day" which I consider always an expression of passion and proof that he was the Countess of Bedford's lover. I have used the arrangement of the rhymes in the stanzas for a poem of my own, just finished. I have the Blake illustration to Gray open on a little table which makes a kind of lectern between two book shelves. My large picture books take their turn there and yours has been there for the last month. The pictures grow in beauty with familiarity.

You may have noticed that we have had riots in the theatre again. I was with you when word reached me of the *Playboy* row. This time* we had a packed theatre and had a packed theatre every day while the play was running, indeed numbers could not get in. The riot was soon over and displayed one curious effect of fine acting. When the Republicans rushed the stage a man caught up a girl, who had been playing a consumptive invalid, and folded her in a cloak as a preliminary to carrying her from the stage—she was not the actress in his eyes but the consumptive girl.

The theatre has now a great following. Indeed all things of the kind are going well with us—minds have been suddenly liberated from hered[it]ary political passion and are looking for other interests. I feel constantly if I were but twenty years old and not over sixty all I ever wanted to do could be done easily. One never tires of life and at the last must die of thirst with the cup at one's lip.

Yours ever

* *Don Juan*, Canto II, Stanzas 177, 181, 183–185, 188.

* The riots this time were caused by the production of *The Plough and the Stars* by Sean O'Casey, produced at the Abbey Theatre on Febuary 8th, 1926.

TO CHARLES RICKETTS

After his marriage in 1917 Yeats made his home for a few years in Oxford, but when the Irish Civil War started in 1922 he felt he should return to live in Ireland. Mrs. Yeats went to Dublin that February and arranged for the purchase of a house there in Merrion Square; while it was being made ready for occupation the summer was spent at Ballylee, near Gort, where Yeats had bought his Tower and its adjoining cottage. These had been made habitable, though slowly, since labour and materials were both scarce owing to war conditions and the unsettled state of the country. In November of this year, after the return to Dublin, appeared the first two volumes, *Later Poems* and *Plays in Prose and Verse*, of Messrs. Macmillan's green cloth uniform edition of Yeats's writings, for which Charles Ricketts had

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designed the cover and also a drawing of unicorn and fountain as decoration for the end-papers.

—A. W.

Nov 5 [1922] 82 Merrion Square
Dublin

My dear Ricketts:

Yesterday my wife brought the books up to my study, and not being able to restrain her excitment I heard her cry out before she reached the door, "You have perfect books at last." Perfect they are—serviceable and perfect. The little design of the unicorn is a masterpiece in that difficult kind. You have given my work a decoration of which one will never tire and all I have done will gradually be put into this form. It is a pleasure to me to think that many young men here and elsewhere will never know my work except in this form. My own memory proves to me that at 17 there is an identity between an author's imagination and paper and bookcover one does not find in later life. I still do not quite separate Shelley from the green covers, or Blake from the blue covers and brown reproductions of pictures, of the books in which I first read them. I do not separate Rossetti at all from his covers.

Life here is pleasant but disturbed. Last night I was entertained at dinner by an Arts Club and decided to use the occasion to speak very seriously about the state of the country. We began at 7.30 and the tide of frivolous speech and parody ran so fast and high that I was in despair—not seeing how I should interest such an audience. At 10.15 (and I was to speak at 10.30) somebody threw a bomb outside in the street and the parodist, who was in the middle of a parody of my "Innisfree," did not pause nor did his voice hesitate. However there was a slight increase of solemnity of which I took advantage. Only last Monday evening at 9.30 there was a terrific explosion at the other side of the square, which cracked our kitchen windows, and very thoroughly broke the drawing room windows of the next house. When it was all over my wife and I and Lennox Robinson and a rather nervous guest went out and questioned the sentry at the corner. He answered our questions in a gentle, depressed and rather educated voice and then said "I think this is a dangerous place for you as they may start shooting at me any moment." We hurried home and felt rather heartless.

We left Gort about five weeks ago and the day we left had two feet of water on our kitchen floor as the blowing up of our bridge had dammed the river. The neighbourhood is now I hear quite peaceful as there are no bridges left. Yet I don't find one ever gets quite used to explosions, one is always a little scared. I imagine one has to take them young. Our children will I think have excellent nerves. They will not find a new devilishness in the slamming of the kitchen door. However, though too old for the business, I am in excellent spirits.

Yours ever

TO OLIVIA SHAKESPEAR

Mrs. Shakespear was a cousin of the poet Lionel Johnson. Yeats first met her about 1894 and the friendship then formed endured until the end of her life in 1938. She was beautiful and talented, and between 1894 and 1910 published some half-dozen novels which had charm and distinction. Not all the letters which Yeats wrote her have survived, but from 1917 onwards he wrote to her at frequent intervals, long intimate letters concerning his work, his interests and opinions, his reading, his health, his family, Irish politics, and the daily details of his life.—A. W.

Dec 7 [Postmark 8 Dec 1926]
82 Merrion Square
Dublin.

My dear Olivia:

I have not written as life has been rather broken since I returned—writing a couple of poems or so in a dream, entertaining a great Swedish architect,*giving up my study

*Rangar Östberg, the architect of the Stockholms Stadshus.

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to a Cuala sale. Now I have got back to system as far as this is compatible with a new poem. I told you and showed you part of two series of poems in which a man and woman in old or later life remember love. I am writing for each series contrasting poems of youth

> "I laid a hand upon that head
> of blossom tinted stone
> And can neither work nor play
> Since the deed was done:
> O but hands are lunatic
> That travel on the moon."*

I think it likely that there will be yet another series upon the old man and his soul as he slowly comes to understand that the mountains are not solid, that all he sees is a mathematical line drawn between hope and memory. Whatever I do, poetry will remain a torture.

My version of *Œdipus* comes on tonight. I think my shaping of the speech will prove powerful on the stage, for I have made it bare, hard and natural like a saga, and that it will be well, though not greatly, acted—it is all too new to our people. I am more anxious about the audience, who will have to sustain an hour and a half of tension. The actor who plays *Œdipus*† felt the strain at dress rehearsal so much that he could hardly act in the last great moments—a good audience will give him life, but how will the Catholics take it? In rehearsal I had but one overwhelming emotion, a sense as of the actual presence in a terrible sacrament of the god. But I have got that always, though never before so strongly, from Greek Drama.

Yours

[*on the envelope*] *Œdipus* great success.‡ Critics and audience enthusiastic.

March 9 [Postmark 1933]

Riversdale
Willbrook,
Rathfarnham,
Dublin.

My dear Olivia

I shall be in London on April 10. I had meant to go rather sooner as my gardener says I should not miss the garden in April. You can apply much of the Swami thought to our life if you translate it. "Act and remain apart from action."

During the last few days I have been in conflict with certain people in the government about the Abbey. I had to risk its future: only yesterday did I get the decision I wished. I watch myself with interest. I found that once I had a clear idea, and knew I was not acting from temper, I did not seem to be personally involved. I looked on as if some stranger was doing it all. I had an hour's interview with De Valera. I had never met him before and I was impressed by his simplicity and honesty though we differed throughout. It was a curious experience, each recognised the other's point of view so completely. I had gone there full of suspicion but my suspicion vanished at once. You must not believe what you read in the English papers. They decide moral questions in the interest of their parties and express their decisions with a complacency that rouses other nations to fury. Here I think we are generally troubled about right and wrong, we don't decide easily. The hungry man is nearer to the Saint than the full man. "A hair divides the false and true"—one should never be satisfied in any controversy until one has found the hair—one is liable to think it must look like a ship's cable.

I wish I could put the Swami's lectures into the Cuala series but I cannot. My sister's books are like an old family magazine. A few hundred people buy them all and expect a common theme. Only once did I put a book into the series that was not Irish—Ezra's Noh plays—and I had to write a long introduction to annex Japan to Ireland.

I have finished my essay on *Louis Lambert.* How one loves Balzac's audience!—great ladies, diplomatists, everybody who goes to grand opera, and ourselves. Then think of

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* These lines, much revised, form the second verse of the poem "First Love" in the group "A Man Young and Old," included in *The Tower*, 1928.

† Œdipus was played by the late F. J. McCormack, a prominent and very talented member of the Abbey Theatre company.

‡ *King Œdipus* was produced at the Abbey Theatre on December 6th, 1926; Yeats was at work on his version of *Œdipus at Colonus* at this time.

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Tolstoy's—all the bores, not a poor sinner amongst them.

At the club the other day I spent an hour reading Comte de Tilly but when I went back for another read it had gone. I like the love affairs but I would [like] more detail, they are too abstract. That affair in the carriage which was so unsatisfactory. One feels that neither the Persian, nor the pedantic Indian amorist should have omitted from his work, travelling by carriage.

The Comte de Tilly should have been able to refer to precedents, or to create one, to find perhaps a new rhythm.

Joyce and D. H. Lawrence have however almost restored to us the Eastern simplicity. Neither perfectly for D. H. Lawrence romanticises his material, with such words as "essential fire" "darkness" etc., and Joyce never escapes from his Catholic sense of sin. Rabelais seems to escape from it by his vast energy. Yet why not take Swedenborg literally and think we attain, in a partial contact, what the spirits know throughout their being? He somewhere describes two spirits meeting, and as they touch they become a single conflagration. His vision may be true, Newton's cannot be. When I saw at Mrs Crandon's objects moved and words spoken from some aerial centre, where there was nothing human, I rejected England and France and accepted Europe. Europe belongs to Dante and the witches' sabbath, not to Newton.

Yours affectionately

June 30 [Postmark 1932]

42, Fitzwilliam Square,
Dublin.

My dear Olivia

Two weeks ago I wrote you a long letter but I wrote in such an excited condition of gloom that I tore it up, stamped envelope and all. Now I am normal and cheerful, though at the moment weary. I have had a long directors' meeting at the theatre, and then had my sister to lunch and then a discussion as to designs. I have had that rarest of things a success in my own family. You remember those stations of the cross. I got three examples designed and worked in preparation for Eucharistic week. The whole set has been sold and my sister has profitable work till next May. My next scheme will be much more ambitious and much more charming—at least it will if I can come to terms with a certain designer. The last designs were all St Peter's at Rome and a bore, the furthest the average Catholic mind can go back. Now Byzantium, the ages of faith and modern perversion. The house at Westminster used by Wilde and his friends had a really noble crucifix, and . . . will end at Lourdes. I have found the perfect designer. St. Peter's is so salubrious.

This is the last letter you will get from this house. George is at our new house painting walls and doors and generally moving in. I shall go to the hotel in a few days, probably at Glendalough in Co. Wicklow, and then to our new house "Riversdale, Willbrook, Rathfarnham." There apple trees, cherry trees, roses, smooth lawns and no long climb upstairs. I shall be there three months, then after two weeks in London I start for America and lecture but will return in time for your seventieth birthday. I spend my days correcting proofs. I have just finished the first volume, all my lyric poetry and am greatly astonished at myself. As it is all speech rather than writing I keep saying what man is this who in the course of two or three weeks—the improvisation suggests the tune—says the same thing in so many different ways. My first denunciation of old age I made in *The Wanderings of Usheen* (end of part 1) before I was twenty and the same denunciation comes in the last pages of the book. The swordsman throughout repudiates the saint, but not without vacillation. Is that perhaps the sole theme—Usheen and Patrick—"so get you gone Von Hügel though with blessings on your head?"

Yours affectionately

May 22 [Postmark 1933]

Riversdale,
Willbrook,
Rathfarnham,
Dublin.

My dear Olivia

I shall reach London on June 9 (I get my degree on June 8). I have refused an invitation

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to Cambridge (to read my verse to English Club) as I would have had to go there before June 15 and so missing you. You are leaving London on I think June 15 or thereabouts. Please let me know your plans, as I rather forget them.

My two sensations at the moment are Hulme's *Speculations* and *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. The first in an essay called *Modern Art* relates such opposites as *The Apes of God* and *Lady Chatterley*. Get somebody to lend you the last if you have not read it. Frank Harris's *Memoirs* are vulgar and immoral—the sexual passages were like holes burnt with a match in a piece of old newspaper; their appeal to physical sensation was hateful; but *Lady Chatterley* is noble. Its description of the sexual act is more detailed than in Harris, the language is sometimes that of cabmen and yet the book is all fire. Those two lovers, the gamekeeper and his employer's wife, each separated from their class by their love, and by fate, are poignant in their loneliness, and the coarse language of the one, accepted by both, becomes a forlorn poetry uniting their solitudes, something ancient, humble and terrible.

Yours affectionately

I write no more that I may catch the post.

May 25 [Postmark 27 May 33]

Riversdale,
Willbrook,
Rathfarnham,
Dublin.

My dear Olivia

I have changed my plans. I go to London on Friday June 2 so please keep some portion of Saturday and Sunday for me. On Monday I go to Oxford where I spend the night at the Eights' Club and then go to Cambridge for my degree and will be back in London on Jun 9.

Of course Lawrence is an emphasis directed against modern abstraction. I find the whole book interesting and not merely the sexual parts. They are something that he sets up as against the abstraction of an age that he thinks dead from the waist downward. Of course happiness is not where he seems to place it. We are happy when for everything inside us there is an equivalent something outside us. I think it was Goethe said this. One should add the converse. It is terrible to desire and not possess, and terrible to possess and not desire. Because of this we long for an age which has the unity which Plato somewhere defined as sorrowing and rejoicing over the same things. How else escape the Bank Holiday crowd?

I have bought a suit of rough blue serge.

Yours

Read *Twenty Years a-Growing** or some of it. I once told you that you would be happy if you had twelve children and lived on limpets. There are limpets on the Great Blasket.

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* *Twenty Years a-Growing* by Maurice O'Sullivan. Yeats wrote a short review of the book in *The Spectator*, June 2nd, 1933.

(These letters are printed by kind permission of Mrs. W. B. Yeats. I am indebted to Mr. James A. Healy of New York for use of the first letter to J. B. Yeats; to Sir Herbert Grierson for those written to himself; to Mrs. Sturge Moore for that to Charles Ricketts; and to Mrs. Yeats for the other letters to J. B. Yeats and those to Mrs. Shakespear.—Allan Wade.)

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Arthur Koestler

A Guide to Political Neuroses

MOST contemporary theories regarding political behaviour are based on a curious paradox. It is common knowledge (a) that crowds tend to behave in an irrational manner ("mass hysteria," "mass obsessions," etc.). It is equally common knowledge (b) that individuals often react in an irrational manner to the problems of sex and in their relations to family, superiors, and subordinates. Yet, while we admit that crowds behave like neurotics in public affairs, and that individuals display complexes in their private affairs, we still cling to the strange illusion that the average citizen, when not in a crowd, is a politically rational being. Our whole manner of running a democracy is based on this implicit assumption. This unwarranted, dogmatic belief in the political rationality of the individual is the ultimate reason why democracies are always on the defensive against totalitarian opponents, not only physically but also psychologically. For the evidence suggests that twentieth-century man is a political neurotic.

The totalitarians have understood this from the beginning. They are the forces of death assailing our civilisation; and as death thrives on disease, he is a good diagnostician. If we want to survive, we must be equally good diagnosticians. But one cannot arrive at a correct diagnosis if one starts with the assumption that the patient is sane. The belief in the basic political sanity and rationality of the individual has been implanted in us, during the Age of Enlightenment, by a long succession of French, German, and English philosophers—by Encyclopædists, Marxists, Benthamites, Owenites, and Progressives of all shades. Freud and his successors have demolished one corner of this optimistic belief in man as a rational being: we accept the fact that our sexual libido is thwarted. It is time for us to recognise that our political libido is just as complex-ridden, repressed, and twisted, if not even more.

The Mental Iron Curtain

AT first sight it may seem that talk of a "political libido," a "political unconscious" and its "repressed memories," is merely a new intellectual pastime, a juggling with metaphors and analogies. But any detached study of the contemporary scene will show that the neurotic entanglements of the political instinct are as real, and no less profound, than those of the sexual instinct.

A neurotic may be described as a person who has faulty contact with reality, and whose judgements are based, not on hard facts, but on his wishes and fears. Facts which are likely to upset the patient's wish-and-fear universe are not admitted to consciousness; they are "censored" and become repressed complexes. If this simplified schema is applied to political behaviour, it will be seen to cover the whole range of political pathology, from the "controlled schizophrenia" of a Klaus Fuchs, through the wish-dream world of the Stockholm peace campaigner, to the flight from reality of the "neutralist." The political clichés which serve as rationalisations of his unconscious fears are as irrelevant as a neurotic's explanations of why he won't eat fish. When Harold Laski wrote to Mr. Justice Frankfurter in 1941 that "the U.S.S.R. has its roots in popular opinion more profound than any other system," argument had become pointless against such vagaries of the political libido, and the professor had become an obvious case for the psychotherapist.

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Into the neurotic's distorted universe no facts are admitted which may upset its inner consistency. Arguments cannot penetrate the buffers of casuistry, the semantic shock-absorbers, the emotional defences. The inner censor—in the full psychiatric sense of the word—that protects the patient's illusions against the intrusion of reality, is incomparably more effective than any totalitarian state censorship. The political neurotic carries his private Iron Curtain inside his skull.

The unpalatable facts which have been rejected by the inner censor are subsequently repressed and cluster into complexes. The political subconscious has its own logic, symptoms, and symbols. Alger Hiss and Whittaker Chambers have become such symbols in a Punch-and-Judy show or dream-fantasia, where guilt is attributed, not on the strength of evidence but according to the dream-logic of the unconscious. If "censored" facts are mentioned in the presence of the political neurotic, he will react either with vehemence or a superior smile, either with straight abuse or with devious double-think, according to the nature of the defence mechanism which protects him against his deep uncertainty and unconscious fear. Otherwise, the precarious balance of his dream-world would collapse and leave him defenceless against the stark world of reality—a reality so terrifying that even the sane can only face it with a shudder.

Repressed Guilt

In the gas chambers of Auschwitz, Belsen, and other extermination camps, around six million human beings were put to death during the closing phase of the Second World War. It was the greatest organised mass-killing in history. At the time when it happened, the majority of the German people did not know what was going on. Since then, official documents, books, and films have made the facts public to such an extent that it has become impossible for any educated person to ignore them. And yet the average German does manage to ignore them. The truth has not penetrated the nation's consciousness, and probably never will—because it is too terrifying to face. If admitted to consciousness, the load of guilt would be too heavy to carry and would crush the nation's pride, frustrate its effort to rise again as a great European power. Many intelligent and well-meaning Germans react, when Auschwitz and Belsen are mentioned in their presence, with a stony silence and the pained expression of a Victorian lady confronted with a rude reminder of the Facts of Life: that they happen to be facts, never enters her head; they are just unmentionable, and that is all there is to them. Others will either deny the facts, or call them vastly exaggerated, or will, in the same breath, use several mutually contradictory arguments without being aware of the contradiction.

The remarkable thing about this reaction-pattern is that it betrays an unconscious guilt-complex even among those who had no share in the killings—and these are the vast majority of the Germans. Before the law, and as far as their conscious knowledge goes, they are innocent. To make a nation collectively responsible for the deeds of a criminal minority is both legally and morally unjust. But the "political subconscious" approaches the matter in a different way. It automatically assumes a shared collective responsibility in the nation's triumphs and defeats, in its honour and guilt. In fact, the most outstanding characteristic of the political libido is its tendency to identify the self with a nation, tribe, church, or party. The political libido can be defined as the individual's need to feel himself as part of a community, his urge to belong.

Now when this unconscious tendency towards identification produces pleasurable results, these are willingly admitted to the conscious self: every German feels proud of "our Goethe" as if he had a share in creating him, every American feels satisfaction about the War of Independence as if he had fought in it. But the less pleasurable products of the tendency towards identification occupy no such place of honour in the conscious ego. And still others may act as a traumatic shock, and therefore must be quickly forgotten and repressed. *Our* Goethe, *our* Beethoven, *my* country are part and parcel of the ego. But *our* Auschwitz, *our* gassed babies, the war which *we* started, must be forced into the mental underground.

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Repressed political complexes have a thwarting effect, just as repressed sexual complexes. A lasting cure can only be effected if the repressed experience is brought back to memory, however painful the process may be. In the case under discussion, this operation of mental hygiene could only be accomplished by the leaders of the German people. Punishment and humiliation inflicted from outside only make things worse. For the victors it is right to forget; but the vanquished must learn to remember.

Collective Amnesia

THE French suffer from a repressed complex of a different kind, of which the manifestations are even more conspicuous. When the legitimate government of France, after the collapse of its armies, capitulated in June 1940, the majority of Frenchmen accepted the defeat and tried to reach some kind of *modus vivendi* with the German victors. With Europe gone and England hopelessly isolated, this was for the average, non-political Frenchman the only reasonable course to take. When General de Gaulle proclaimed from London that "France had lost a battle but had not lost the war," the people trapped in France understood that this was a nice propaganda slogan, but had little relation to the facts. For approximately two years they went about their business as best they could, and enjoyed relative peace. Only a small number among them followed de Gaulle's call and escaped to England to enlist in his volunteer army or joined the resistance movement. This again is only natural, for at the time resistance seemed sheer madness or quixotry, and at all times in all nations the heroic madmen have been a tiny minority.

The turning of the tide of war, the forced enlistment of Frenchmen for labour service in Germany, and a number of related factors gradually swelled the ranks of the resistance movement until, at the time of the Allied landing, some 20,000 to 40,000 Frenchmen were seriously engaged in sabotage, espionage, and armed resistance. Even at that time they were a small minority, and their bravery and self-sacrifice did not materially affect the course of the war. France was liberated not by the *maquis* but by the power of the Anglo-American war machine, by British and American aircraft and tanks.

This hard fact was slurred over by the Anglo-American leaders who, for reasons of courtesy, vastly over-emphasised the French contribution to the war. It is only natural that French generals and politicians took the same line, in order to bolster up the nation's shaken self-respect and save it from the humiliating awareness of having been liberated by foreigners. Thus, within less than a year, the average Frenchman became honestly convinced that France had never been defeated, that she had been saved by her own effort, and moreover that he, Monsieur Dupont, had always been a valiant *résistant* and had only been lacking in opportunity to prove it. The memories of his own thoughts and acts during the dark interlude between 1940 and '43 have been so successfully repressed that those years have become a kind of gap or hole in the texture of French history. This explains how it became possible for the French Communists, who from 1939 to 1941 had openly preached treason and surrender and had called resistance to the German aggression an "imperialist adventure" and a "rich man's war," to emerge four years later as the strongest party in France. They benefited from the collective amnesia; their record was swallowed by the gap in the nation's memory.

THUS the mental structure of present-day France is built on delusion and self-delusion. The legend of the undefeated, victorious nation was first maintained by mutual tacit consent, then quickly grew into an act of faith. The former collaborator not only wears the ribbon of the *résistance* in his buttonhole; he also honestly believes that he is entitled to wear it. Because he admires the heroes of the resistance movement, and because he feels that they represent the true spirit of the nation, he is unconsciously led to believe that he belongs to them. It is *our* Goethe, *our* Jeanne d'Arc, *we* the nation of heroic *maquisards* all over again.

We see here a similar process at work as in the case of the Germans—the process of unconscious identification with a representative minority—but with opposite results. In the case

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of the Germans, identification resulted in shared guilt which had to be repressed. In the case of the French, identification leads to shared glory, and allows the political libido to expand with a flourish. But the repressed memories exert their steady, poisonous influence on the nation's morale. The fiction of the past can only be maintained by evading the reality of the present. France, so the legend goes, owed nobody anything in the past, and will owe nobody anything in the future. If Marshall Aid is sent to her, it is done to serve some obscure scheme of Wall Street. If arms and troops are sent, it is to further the interests of American imperialism. The only war-time memories connected with Americans which have remained vivid and undistorted are that the bombers often missed their targets, destroying French cities and lives; and that G.I.s often got drunk and traded cigarettes for the passing favours of women. Hence: no more liberation *à l'Américaine*. We want to be left alone. We want none of your alms, and none of your coca-cola, and none of your atom-bombs. If you leave us alone, the Russians will leave us alone too.

Elaborate variations of this theme can be read every day in French newspapers of all shades. The one subject never mentioned is the tragic but crucial fact that the physical survival of France depends on the American atomic potential. If it were admitted, the whole fictitious structure would collapse. And if one were to take away the wishful element from the patient's wish-and-fear world, only fear would remain—the unbearable, repressed terror of a Europe still virtually defenceless against the Russian threat.

So the fiction has to be maintained, and reality evaded at all cost. This is not conscious hypocrisy, nor ingratitude, and it implies no slight on the French character. Any nation which has suffered three invasions within one century and lost at least one male member per family, would develop the same neurotic pattern.

Escape from Reality

ESCAPE from reality is a basic feature of contemporary Europe, but has for a long time been a specific British vice. It almost seems as it the British had paid for their remarkable immunity against hysteria by imperviousness to reality; a shortcoming craftily hidden by the art of making their follies appear as sweet reasonableness.

In the days of the London blitz, the P.E.N. Club had asked Louis Golding to give a talk comparing the American to the British novel. Golding had just finished when the air-raid warning went, but the discussion was continued, business as usual. The second or third speaker was a crumpled, tweedy, lovable little man who, I believe, had written a biography of an obscure Wiltshire naturalist of the 17th century. He was attacking Hemingway, Dos Passos, Faulkner, *et al.*

"It seems to me," he gently explained, "that these modern American novelists suffer from a morbid preoccupation with violence. When you read their books you would think that the ordinary man spends his life punching people's noses or being hit on the head. Now, as a matter of fact, ordinary people rarely meet with violence in their lives. They get up in the morning, potter in their gardens. . . ."

A bomb whistled and crashed some blocks away, and the anti-aircraft batteries started their infernal hollering. The little man waited patiently for the next lull, then calmly continued:

"What I mean to say is, violence rarely plays a part in ordinary people's lives, and it is positively indecent for an artist to devote so much time and space to that kind of thing. . . ."

ONE of the outstanding features of neurotic behaviour is the patient's inability to learn from his past experiences. As if acting under a spell, he gets himself again and again into the same type of entanglement and repeats the same errors. British foreign policy towards European union, and French internal policies during the last thirty years seem to be dictated by this kind of repetition-compulsion.

The trigger which set off the Second World War was Germany's claim to a town that formed an enclave in Polish territory and could only be reached through a corridor. That war was not yet over when Allied statesmen agreed

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to create a new enclave of exactly the same type, only accessible through a corridor across foreign territory. The name of the first enclave was Danzig; the name of the second is Berlin. Behind the shallow truism that "history repeats itself" hide the unexplored forces which lure men into repeating their own tragic errors.

The obvious and outstanding example of such a compulsion is the so-called policy of appeasement. The lesson of the '30s: that an aggressive, expansive power with a messianic belief in its mission will expand as long as a power-vacuum exists; that improvement of social conditions, however desirable in itself, is no deterrent and no protection against attack; that the price of survival is the sacrifice of a distressing part of the national income for defence over a distressingly long period; and that appeasement, however seductive and plausible its arguments sound, is not a substitute for military strength but a direct invitation to war —all this should be still only too fresh in our memories; yet an astonishing number of politicians, not to mention the millions of common men, seem determined to commit the same errors, and re-live the same tragedy again.

"From the danger of war one cannot protect oneself by weapons, one can achieve this only by moving forward into a new world of law. . . . Armaments cannot be fought by piling up armaments; that would be like getting Beelzebub to drive out the Devil."

This sounds like a speech by Mr. Aneurin Bevan in 1953. In fact it is a speech by Mr. Clement Attlee, delivered on March 11th, 1935 in the House of Commons in protest against the Government's proposal of a modest increase in rearmament.* When he suggested "disbanding the national armies" as a brilliant idea to save peace, he was interrupted by shouts "Tell that to Hitler." He brushed the interruption aside, as Mr. Bevan brushes similar irrelevancies aside eighteen years later. In the same year, 1935, a "Peace Ballot" obtained eleven million signatures in England—more than half the English electorate. All this is forgotten today, repressed and relegated to the political subconscious.

* Obviously, one could find similar statements by Conservative spokesmen of other periods.

Even the slogans by which the aggressor hypnotised the victim were the same. Hitler sponsored Peace Congresses of German and French war veterans who protested against the conspiracy of the "cannon merchants" and the pluto-democratic warmongers of Wall Street. Anti-Nazi refugees who talked about Hitler's concentration camps and aggressive intentions were regarded as atrocity-mongers, persecution maniacs, and fomenters of hatred between nations, as their successors, Russian refugees and ex-Communists, are regarded today. If only the Cassandras and Jeremiahs would shut up, all would be well! After each act of aggression, Hitler made a gesture of peace which was as eagerly taken at face value as similar gestures by Stalin and Malenkov; men who warned against such gullibility were accused of deliberately sabotaging the chances of peaceful settlement. The scapegoat, the "real warmonger," was at that time not the U.S.A. but—France. When Duff Cooper, then Minister for War, made a speech strongly emphasising Franco-British friendship, he was attacked by Labour in both Houses, and Mr. Attlee pointed out that "such strong emphasis on friendship with one country induces other countries (i.e. Germany) to wonder why they are not addressed with similar friendship." When Hitler marched into the Rhineland (and immediately afterwards offered a twenty-five years' peace pact), the French Prime Minister came to London, and had the same type of welcome that American generals have nowadays in France. Detached political experts who did not like the Nazi régime warned against exaggerating its dangers by pointing out that the Germans only wanted to annex German territories such as the Rhineland and the Saar, but were "far too intelligent" to swallow a foreign body like Czechoslovakia, which they could never digest. Since 1945, we hear precisely the same argument regarding Russia's intentions in Central and Western Europe.

The result of all this was that by 1936 the Belgians, Rumanians, Yugoslavs, etc., had become "neutralists" and the system of collective security disintegrated as N.A.T.O. is disintegrating today.

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The neurotic who each time commits the same type of error and each time hopes to get away with it is not stupid; he is just ill.

Some Minor Aberrations

For nearly every aberration of the sexual drive we can find a corresponding type of disturbance of the political libido. I shall mention only a few of the most prevalent patterns of political neurosis.

Ambivalence

A person may both love and hate another person, and experience these emotions either simultaneously or in alternation—as in the case of temperamental couples or difficult child-parent relations. A typically ambivalent relationship of this kind exists between Britain and the U.S.A. Americans both love and deride English aristocrats, fashions, accents, and the stuffiness of British traditions in general. The British, for different reasons, view America with equally mixed feelings of admiration and mockery, envy and contempt. About once in every six months Anglo-American relations get poisoned and there is a minor crisis—mostly caused, not by any real conflict of interests, but by the mutual exasperation typical in an ambivalent partnership.

It also happens in neurotic case histories that an emotion is succeeded in a lasting fashion by its opposite: blind infatuation by blind hatred, fervent admiration by shuddering revulsion. Many ex-Communists, ex-Catholics, and ex-patriates fall into this attitude of the disappointed lover towards the party, church, or country which once meant everything to them.

Fetishism

In psychiatric parlance, this means an aberration whereby the sexual instinct becomes attached to a symbol, or accessory, or part of its natural object. Women's locks, or corsets, or riding-boots, and even pin-up portraits, may become the object of fetishist worship. Exactly the same fate may befall the political libido.

The fetish-character of such symbols as flags, uniforms, emblems, songs, and anthems is too obvious to need emphasis. In an equally obvious way, propaganda exploits such characteristic features as Hitler's forelock, Churchill's cigar, Stalin's high-necked tunic. Though the existence of such mass-infatuations is known, they are rarely recognised as the pathological symptoms they are. They not only mean a regression to primitive idolatry and totem-worship, but also, that the symbol or part which has become the object of the fetishist cult replaces the thing which it stands for, and thus deflects the social energy from its original aim. The political drive of millions of idealists who started on the quest for a better world has thus been perverted, the striving for progress turned into the worship of "the Party," which is no longer regarded as an accessory to the original purpose, but as an object of worship in its own right.

Eternal Adolescents

The young radical intellectual of Bloomsbury, St. Germain des Prés, or Greenwich village is a relatively harmless type. Often his radicalism is derived from adolescent revolt against the parents or some other stereotyped conflict which makes him temporarily despair of the world. But some of the young radicals never grow up; they remain the eternal adolescents of the Left.

One variety of this type is frequently found both in the United States and in France, though rarely in England. Young X. starts as an enthusiastic Communist, is soon disillusioned, founds a Trotskyite opposition group of ten people, discovers that six out of the ten form a secret "opposition bloc" within the group, is disillusioned, founds a little "mag" with a hundred per cent true anti-capitalist, anti-Stalinist, anti-pacifist programme, goes bankrupt, starts a new little mag, and so on. All his struggles, polemics, victories, and defeats are storms in a teacup, confined to the same small circle of radical intellectuals—a kind of family which thrives on quarrels and mutual denunciations, and yet coheres by virtue of some unique dialectical glue. A classic example is the group of Marxist-Existentialists around Sartres's *Les Temps Modernes*, with their perennial quarrels and schisms. The sectarian may be said to suffer from the *incestuous* type of political libido.

A different type is Y., the busybody, whose name is on every "progressive" committee,

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whose voice is raised in protest against every injustice, who has embraced every good cause under the sun, and has never achieved anything on earth. Y. is the political equivalent of a *nymphomaniac*; he suffers from an excess of political libido. This kind of neurosis, too, flourishes chiefly in the climate of the Left—for, generally speaking, the Left is politically oversexed.

Finally there is Z., the political *masochist*. With him, the parable of the mote and the beam has been reversed. The slightest injustice in his own country wrings from him cries of anguish and despair, but he finds excuses for the most heinous crimes committed in the opposite camp. When a coloured tennis player is refused a room in a London luxury hotel, Z. quivers with spontaneous indignation; when millions spit out their lungs in Soviet Arctic mines and lumber-camps, Z.'s sensitive conscience is silent. Z. is an inverted patriot, whose self-hatred and craving for self-punishment has turned into hatred for his country or social class and a yearning for the whip that will scourge it.

The Desire to Belong

It is a truism of psychiatry that nobody is perfectly sane. The difference between a normal person and a neurotic is a difference in degree, not in kind. But in specific periods of history, the social and cultural climate favours specific trends towards neurosis and aberration. In golden-age Greece, male homosexuality was an almost general phenomenon. In the 1920's, promiscuity reached unprecedented proportions. The political libido has similar ups and downs, ranging from relative normality to near-insanity. For a considerable time now we have been witnessing a steady deterioration towards the latter.

The possible causes of this process can only be briefly alluded to. While the sexual drive serves to perpetuate the race, the political libido represents the individual's urge to identify himself with an idea or a set of values embodied in a community—in other words, his need "to belong." Both are basic human instincts, though during the last few decades the importance of the second has been somewhat obscured by the Freudians' exclusive emphasis on the first.

In medieval days, despite wars, famines, and epidemics, man lived in a relatively stable universe. The formidable authority of the church, the fixed hierarchy of the medieval state, the belief in providence and divine justice, gave people a feeling of security and belonging. Then came a series of earthquakes, starting with the Renaissance, continued during the Reformation, and culminating in the French and Russian Revolutions, which gradually but completely shattered man's outlook on society and the universe. Medieval life had been regulated by unchallengeable commands, each ending with an exclamation mark; now all these were turned into question marks. The whole earth, formerly the stable centre of the universe, was transformed into a swirling experimental laboratory; values crumbled, ties snapped, the political libido of man was turned loose like an adolescent's erotic cravings. But up to this day the quest for a new, comprehensive order and creed which would embrace man's relation *both* to the universe and to society, has remained without result. Twentieth-century man is a political neurotic because he has no answer to the question of the meaning of life, because socially and metaphysically he does not know where he "belongs."

According to circumstances, a frustrated instinct may manifest itself in a great variety of forms, and contradictory symptoms are often found in the same person. Prolonged frustration and defeat may lead to an atrophy of the instinct—the patient becomes socially apathetic, his disappointments turn into political cynicism and anti-social behaviour. Symptoms of this process, of the political libido turning sour, can be most strikingly observed in contemporary France.

Even more dangerous is the opposite process. The unfulfilled urge "to belong" may lead to "political oversexedness," expressing itself in blind, self-sacrificing devotion to some unholy cause. In our age those who felt most deeply that paradise was lost, were the first to be attracted by the *Ersatz*-kingdoms of heaven: the World Revolution, Soviet Russia, or the

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Thousand-Year-Reich. In psychiatric language, they developed "fixations" of their political libido towards these gory substitutes for Utopia.

All this does not mean that one should underestimate the importance of economic factors and social pressures. No psychiatrist can cure poverty and disease among the vast populations of Asia. But the crucial point is that before the economic needs of people express themselves in political action, a mental process intervenes; and this mental process, as often as not, initiates action directly opposed to the original need. The optimistic thinkers of the 19th century thought that, by and large, the actions of the masses coincided with their interests; the 20th century reminded us that even highly civilised people like the Germans are capable of committing collective suicide, driven by some neurotic obsession, and regardless of economic reality.

Reasoning alone does not help against such obsessions. It is in the nature of totalitarian creeds that they provide the believer with emotional saturation, a complete experience of belonging. Though Communism is a phantom-creed, it nevertheless has the dynamism of a secular religion. For the frustrated and starved, it has all the sex-appeal of a strong, monolithic creed, as compared to our complex and divided culture. Democracy can neither create a conspiratorial instrument comparable to the Cominform, nor produce a counter-phantom to the Communist creed. It has no panacea for the manifold problems which beset our civilisation. And yet we can only survive if we are not only stronger in arms, but also capable of breaking the hypnotic power of the phantom.

The first condition for that is a correct diagnosis. Politicians are supposed to have a smattering of history and economics; it is time they were obliged to learn the elements of psychology, and to study the strange mental forces which compel people to act with such stubborn determination against their proper interests.

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Herbert Luthy

Montaigne,

or the Art of Being Truthful

Reader, here is a truthful book. It warns you, even as you first enter it, that I have set myself only a familiar and private end. I have taken no thought in it either for your needs or my glory. My powers are not equal to such a task. I wish to be seen in it without art or affectation, but simply and naturally: for it is myself I portray. My faults will be found here as they are; also my plain nature, so far as decorum will allow. Had I lived among those peoples of whom it is said they dwell still under the sweet freedom of nature's first laws, I assure you I would have willingly pictured myself wholly naked. Thus, reader, I myself am the only content of my book; there is no reason for you to employ your leisure on so idle and frivolous a subject. Farewell then! From Montaigne, *the first of March*, 1580.

THIS was Montaigne's own foreword to the reader when he first set before the public the book, written "for few people and few years," which has since stood fast against the centuries. What remains to be said after this? Montaigne and his book say frankly everything that they have to say about each other: Montaigne about his book and the book about him; and both go to extraordinary lengths to guard against misunderstanding. "Montaigne is neighbour to us all," and the most openhearted, even gossipy neighbour we could wish for. He hides nothing from us, or nothing essential; and if he, who hardly conceals from us a single peculiarity of his diet or his digestion, forgets to speak of other things—completely of his mother, who survived him by nearly ten years, almost completely of his wife, whose existence he mentions once in passing, and of his children, of whom "two or three" died in childhood—then we can conclude only that these were things that touched him little; and that fact, too, rounds out his portrait.

In the same way, what he has to say about God, the world, and his own times is without shadow or mystery: the absolutely straightforward, unconnected, and changeable opinions of a landed nobleman of middle-class temperament and extraction, opinions born more out of his experience and the common judgement of mankind than of any definite *Weltanschauung*, and quite without pretensions to anything higher or more universal. For he is much less concerned to present the results of his thinking, or even to arrive at results at all, than to follow his thought itself in its playful movement, and to carry us with him. We can,

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indeed, follow him effortlessly, without breathing heavily, for this thought of his never goes very far, it undertakes only little sauntering strolls and always turns back before getting out of sight. Each one of his essays, like the book itself, begins without a purpose; if he sets an object before his mind it is only to put it in motion, as one throws a stone ahead of a dog, not to have him bring it back but to have him run, and is content if he brings back not the stone but an odd piece of wood or a dead mouse.

So it is possible to leaf through the Essays, reading a few pages and turning away at pleasure, as Montaigne himself read, as all his best readers have read him, without fear of losing the thread, for there is none. One learns to know him through his book as one would learn to know one's neighbour in life, through accidental meetings, and the more common the meetings, the more unimportant and unconnected the strokes, the more truthful does the portrait finally become. The best introduction to his book might be simply: Take it and read! or better still: read it and take!—for everyone is free to take what suits him, as Montaigne himself took whatever suited him, in order to make it his own, as, according to his own account, he plucked out of his Plutarch, whenever he picked it up, now a wing and now a leg.

Still, almost everyone who has read Montaigne in this way has mistaken the leg or the wing he brought away for the whole of Montaigne. There have been almost as many different Montaignes as there have been readers of him. For the pious, he was a man of piety, and for the free-thinking, a free-thinker; for the pagan, a pagan, and for Christians, a Christian. For the descendants of the Stoa, he was a Stoic moralist, for Epicureans of the higher or lower variety, he was an Epicurean of their variety; the men of the Enlightenment quoted his judgements on witchcraft and miracles with untiring enthusiasm, their adversaries pointed just as enthusiastically to the long essay called "Apology for Raymond Sebond" and its dethronement of reason. Conservatives found in him a defender of tradition, and the inherited order; the advocates of natural rights saw him as a critic of positive law and of the conventions and veneers of civilisation. The list could be extended endlessly, and just as long a list might be drawn up of what his opponents found to reproach him with.

But, in view of all this, how do things stand with his truthfulness? Is it possible to have so many faces without disguising oneself, and so many truths without being a liar?

MONTAIGNE said everything there was to be said about this too, but it has not helped him much. His foreword to the reader is to be taken quite literally—yet that is exactly what almost no one has done. So that if the Essays hardly require an introduction they do perhaps require some advice: not to look in them for what they do not contain—that is, truths about anything or anyone except Michel de Montaigne. His thoughts and opinions may be wrong or right; they are true only insofar as they are *his* thoughts. Their truth does not lie in where they tend, for they tend everywhere, but in the place from which they depart and to which they return. "*Ramener à soi*" is one of the key phrases of the Essays, untranslatable in its full range of meaning; it means to draw back on oneself, to draw to oneself, to take to oneself, but it contains also the logical meaning of a movement of thought from the object to oneself, and the physical gesture of picking up, holding, or embracing. So Montaigne draws to himself what would escape him: his life, his feelings, his thoughts, his book, his very self; and his reproach against the "licentiousness of thought" is nothing else but that it wishes to pass beyond him and his limitations in order to fix itself in the objective, the absolute, and the unlimited. He, Montaigne, wishes to remain with himself.

For this reason his excursions into the more abstruse matters of philosophy remain, even measured by the standards of his time, scanty and negligent, a mere careless gesture of warding off; he does not care about knowledge of things, only about knowledge of himself. Even when he does for once come to grips with the question of how man can know the truth,

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as in the "Apology for Raymond Sebond," his epistemology remains a kind of shaking of the head: how can man know anything when he cannot even grasp himself? All his philosophic arguments are such arguments *ad hominem*, as unphilosophic as they can be. What has the objective truth of a philosophic proposition to do with the philosopher who propounds it, his indigestion, his passions, and his personal truthfulness?

These are frivolous arguments for anyone who is seeking knowledge of things. But Montaigne has another purpose, for which he wishes never to lose sight of himself, and another frame of reference, which measures truth not by what is said, but by the sayer—which prefers, in other words, subjective truthfulness to objective truth. Every discipline, from physics to theology, can advance step by step from once-given premises to conclusions that pass far beyond the insight and imaginative power of the investigator, and lose all connection with him. Such knowledge, which cuts itself loose from the knower and cleaves to the object, has nothing more to say to him, Michel de Montaigne; it is of no use for self-knowledge. It is for this reason that the disconnectedness, wilfulness, and apparent purposelessness of his essays, the sauntering, tentative, and unpredictable movement of his thought, are not mere wilfulness or incapacity. A thought or a style which submitted itself to any discipline would cease, immediately or wholly, to be his own. He seems always careful to let no structure of thought arise which might stand by itself without his intervention, to let no method intrude between him and his fancies. He prefers, rather, looking on ironically, to let his mind build little houses of cards which he blows down again before they grow too large.

And yet these "mental exercises" reach a greatness, a truth and a profundity, when he follows himself into the twilight borderlands of his consciousness, on the edge of sleep, dreams, distraction, torpor, and death—in those corners where consciousness, Montaigne's consciousness, first becomes fully realised, that is, detached from every connection with the extraneous. These are the places in which he reaches furthest, and we can learn from them not to content ourselves too lightly with Montaigne's seeming superficiality; for much of the dawdling and dallying of the Essays amid the banal and the trivial is, in the same way, a kind of half-sleep of the unconsciousness, in which it permits itself, unknowingly, to be observed. To be sure, many thoughts are brought to light in this way whose interest and even greatness is in themselves; but they are by-products of a thought directed to other ends. For Montaigne, it is not a question of taking the measure of things, but the measure of his eyes. The way in which he sees things, now so, now otherwise, leads to no conclusions about the things, only about himself.

"Montaigne against miracles; Montaigne for miracles," Pascal noted. Montaigne is both at once. He brought together tirelessly and indiscriminately a whole chamber of curiosities, full of all the possible conclusions of his own and all other philosophies, not to play them off against each other, but to display the range and possibility of human thought, and with a little prompting he would accept them all—and the most unusual with the most alacrity. They contradict each other?—yes, but all together they mark out the borders of human awareness, with all its manifold possibilities. "Truth is the whole." To the Essays, too, Hegel's dictum applies, but altered: Michel de Montaigne's truth is the sum of his contradictions. And this truth of his he demonstrates in his book as Dionysus the Cynic demonstrated motion by walking: there he stands, a whole man, in whom all these contradictions come to harmony.

Truth of another, general, superpersonal kind he does not possess and is not looking for. "I do not see the whole of anything," he says, and adds, smiling: "Nor do those who promise to show it to us." This renunciation troubles him so little that almost every general opinion passes as equally valid with him; rather than worry his head over it, he prefers to hold fast to those opinions customary in his land and his family, certainly as good as any other. He is at pains to set them outside the reach of all human possibility of knowing—this is the

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whole content of the "Apology for Raymond Sebond"—the better to put them at a distance. They are unattainable, and they do not trouble him. His essays, those little strolls of thought, never set out in search of such truths, but always and only, in search of Montaigne. The whole, which he calls God or Nature, Fate or Order, almost without distinction, gets along very well without him, and he without it: or rather, he is embedded and hidden in it, like the mole or the plant louse, who also knows nothing of how things stand with the universe.

It is this placid, unquestioning taking of things for granted which roused Pascal to indignation. "There are only three types of men: those who serve God, having found Him; those who exert themselves to seek Him, not having found Him; and those who live without seeking Him and without having found Him." It is plain to which of these categories of Pascal's Michel de Montaigne belongs. Whatever he was, a god-seeker he was not. He fulfilled his religious obligations as he fulfilled those of his rank, his marriage, and his public office, and there is no reason to doubt that he fulfilled them honourably and earnestly. But it was not as something of his own, not out of personal conviction, or as an expression of his own essence; it was rather as something expected of him, in the station allotted him by birth and heredity. The separation is astonishingly clear through the Essays, and it requires gross bias not to see it: where Montaigne is speaking in general and about generalities he seldom neglects to weave into his discourse the rhetoric of orthodoxy which was especially advisable in his age of religious persecution; when he speaks of his external behaviour, his morals and habits, he takes pains to note his crossing of himself, his saying of grace, and his attendance at Mass; but when he really turns to himself, when he is no longer speaking of mankind, life and death in general, but of himself, his life and his death, then faith is left behind, as habit and philosophy are left behind, and he is alone with himself.

This then is Montaignean scepticism. But the philosophic label does not really suit him. Certainly, the description of sceptical thought given by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit* sounds word for word as if it were meant for Montaigne; it is perfectly true that he "only deals with the particular and wallows in the accidental," that his style of thought is "this senseless drivel alternating from one extreme of undifferentiated self-awareness to the other of chance awareness, confused and confusing," and "it perceives its freedom sometimes as a revolt against all the confusion and accidentalness of being and at other times as a falling back into the unessential and a frolicking about in it." It is, too, "only . . . a musical thinking which never arrives at . . . the objective concept" and "so we see only a personality restricted to, and brooding on, itself and its own little activities, as unfortunate as it is unhappy. . . ." How well-aimed this description of the sceptical mind is—and how widely it misses Montaigne! The man who steps before us in the Essays is as little a representative of Hegel's "unhappy consciousness" as he is the damned and despairing figure of Pascal. And just this is perhaps the scandal of Montaigne: to be so aware of that limitation which does not allow him to grasp "the whole," to content himself with the imperfect and the fragmentary, and yet to be so wholly untragic. His scepticism, philosophic as well as religious, is no sorrowful renunciation, because it is not a philosophy, but a form of spiritual hygiene; a device to help hold off the extraneous and give room for what is his own. His truthfulness applies other, but no less stringent, criteria to truth: is it mine? does it fit me? does it remain mine even in sickness, in pain, and in death?

ONE can only speak of Montaigne in contradictions, and as he himself rambled on from one thing to another, so one can ramble on in speaking of him, for his subject is himself, in which all other subjects are mirrored. He imposed no method on himself, not even a method for self-knowledge, and there is no such method except unconditional honesty with oneself. Those astonishing journeys of exploration he made on the frontiers of the unconscious were only possible because through long acquaintance with himself he had found the right distance to keep, in order —as he says once—to consider himself im-

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partially "like a neighbour, or a tree." One can follow precisely this process through the development of the Essays, the process by which Montaigne wins that distance from himself, that lack of a *parti pris*, which is the hardest part of truthfulness.

The first two books of the Essays, in their earlier form, are full of the general truths of Stoic wisdom; these are the essays of which Montaigne later said that they "smelt a little of the property of others." But then that spiritual hygiene begins to operate, the sceptical questioning of his own wisdom—how do I come to it, I, Michel de Montaigne, landed nobleman of Perigord, fifty years old, a little below average height, afflicted with incipient kidney-stones? What does it mean to *me*? This is the beginning of Montaigne's marvellous truthfulness, this return to self, this limitation of truth to his personal measure; and the Essays have remained unique in the consistency with which they follow the path of honesty—the most personal book in world literature. Unique, perhaps, because they took this path not *a priori* but artlessly and unintentionally at first, then with a growing joy of discovery. For the personal belongs also to things one does not achieve by a purposeful striving after them; the self that, without long detours, at once reaches itself, has in reality gone no distance at all and remains empty. To take the measure of one's eyes it is necessary to seek first the measure of things.

Montaigne reflected very earnestly on things outside himself, on the nature and destiny of man, on the state, on law, virtue, marriage and education, on belief in miracles, on the passions, and, over and over, on the possibility of objective knowledge, always with reference to himself but never with reference only to himself. So this book of self-knowledge is no confession, no autobiography, no self-justification or self-accusation, no *Ecce Homo*. Montaigne does not start from himself, he comes to himself quite simply, as one comes to the point.

In Montaigne all the usual motives for self-description are lacking. He did not write out of a sense of his own uncommonness, his "otherness" or his exemplary quality, either for good or evil; on the contrary, his experiment was all the more valid because of his ordinariness, and one often senses that he is emphasising this ordinariness, that he is making himself more ordinary than he is. In this way he escaped all the dangers of conscious self-description, the danger of self-enchantment and the perhaps even greater danger of self-abasement, that "sly humility" of confessionals, whose authors tread themselves into the dust in order to demonstrate how high they have raised themselves above themselves. There is no *Weltschmerz*, remorse, rebellion, accusation, inner strife, grief against others or against himself, nothing of all of that which since Rousseau has driven so many failures to spit in the world's face, so many beaten people to write their *De Profundis*, so many sinners to summon the world to a last judgement on themselves. This is the unusual thing: here a rich, healthy, and fairly happy man makes himself known, one who has thoroughly mastered his life and played his part with honour in the public affairs of his city and his countryside. He does not write in order to create a role for himself, but to lay one aside, and come to himself.

"MUNDUS *universus exercet histrioniam*"; —the word "person" itself, is etymologically, "mask." In this comedy where all must act a role chosen or imposed, in character-masks which everyone finally accepts as his real visage, with commitments, articles of faith, and dogmas which we "believe we believe" and to which we must adhere out of loyalty to ourselves, without much knowing how we really came to them: in this comedy Montaigne's role was thoroughly in order. To set himself at a distance from the mere "making of books," he underlines, rather emphatically on occasion, the man-of-the-world element in himself. He surrounded his ancestry with an aura of old warrior nobility it was not at all entitled to; he notes with pride that as the mayor of his city he had a marshal to precede him and another to follow him; and, with a vanity full of imperceptible self-irony, he quotes the entire Latin text of his Roman patent of nobility. These traits, too, noted by his Jansenist critics with bitter derision, are

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essential to him, and they are mirrored in the Essays without dissimulation. He did not renounce the world in order to find himself: he sought to find himself in the world.

But what is left now of the personality he is seeking? Everything that holds it together, ancestry, education, milieu, habit, convention, principles, relations, beliefs, rank, name, and position comes to it from outside, they are allotted, accidental roles, and yet they make up almost the whole conscious "I." The more closely he considers himself the more his contours blur, the more individuality is dissolved into that many-coloured, unstable, iridescent and fleeting chaos he never, in his contradictoriness, grows tired of describing. Yes, one should play one's role fitly, he says—but always as a role, without identifying oneself with it or losing oneself in it. And this attitude can be followed on the title pages of the early editions of the Essays; if the first two editions, conforming to the custom of the period, still display the full splendour of the titles possessed by the royal knight, councillor, and mayor, Michel de Montaigne, there is left on the title page of the last edition, supervised by Montaigne himself, only his name.

For the stepping out of his role in which the actor betrays himself, a special ear for the undertones of consciousness is needed. All the splendid life of the Essays springs from this keen listening of Montaigne's to his relaxed and outward-turned self. It is true that this kind of thinking goes in circles. But the circle grows smaller and smaller until at last it circles only around the one point at which Montaigne finds himself alone—death. Here all acting ends; "that is a business for one man alone." The thought of death engaged him early, and we can follow the process of his self-discovery in nothing so clearly as in his relation to death. In death he found the ultimate test of truthfulness. To come to terms with it was what Montaigne sought, in the beginning, from philosophy. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta!* "To philosophise is to learn to die," he titled the long chapter on death in the first book, written when he was still full of the wisdom of the ancients about life and death; and all the consolations of Stoicism are here summoned up. Montaigne always understood as philosophy this spiritual elevation of man in the face of his sad, confused, and ephemeral humanity, and that was what he still meant by it when he said later, of himself, "I am no philosopher." He has reached the end of the way when, considering the calm and natural death of the simplest men in the plague year 1585, he rejects Cicero's phrase about the philosophic preparation for death as idle boasting: What is it, to be able to do what every fool and every beast can and must do? to strike a pose in order to endure what everyone must endure anyway? If philosophising is to learn to die, "well then, let us go to school with stupidity." To learn to live, not die, is wisdom. The essays of his first and last period can be endlessly contrasted, for with the change in his attitude towards death all the perspectives and measuring-rods of life change too.

Yet the last judgements do not cancel the first; nothing is taken back, only added to and deepened. In the beginning it is man, life, and death that occupy him, in the end it is only "my life" and "my death," and he is no longer dealing with a philosophic allegory of death, but experiencing and enduring his own slow dissolution. He, Michel de Montaigne, can no longer push death out of his consciousness, for it is he himself who is dying, together with his consciousness, and no speculation can prevail against this. Here he no longer grants himself the doubt that makes everything else, even miracles, possible; death is the end, and whatever may be on the other side, he, Michel de Montaigne, remains on this side. The consolations of philosophy, like those of religion, he never denies, he leaves them undecided; he accepts extreme unction and the sympathy of friends, but they do not concern him; these are the last actions of a life lived according to custom and usage, since it was not granted him to die unmolested—"quite alone"—journeying and far from home. A man must act his role in life to the last instant.

The Stoic, like the Christian, contempt for death is grounded in the contempt for physical life, but the more Montaigne feels himself disappearing the more deeply he feels that this life

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is all he has, and that it is much and precious. Now he finds in all contempt for life the overweening pride of the human spirit, the will to lift itself over and beyond itself towards the absolute, a revolt against the unbearable thought of existing today and ceasing to exist tomorrow —against the natural order that embraces both life and death. His last essay, already full of the presence of death and the readiness for it, closes with a hymn to this existence. "*C'est une absolue perfection, et comme divine. . . .*" In the presence of death Montaigne learned to love life, to "hold it fast with tooth and claw," to savour it to the last drop. Life is earthly, but not therefore void; transitory but not therefore despicable; losable, but not absurd; precious beyond words in its very fragility and unsureness.

In these last dialogues with old age, sickness, and death, there is no more art and no more cleverness, only obedience and assent to the riddling laws of life and death—*amor fati*. But if this is wisdom, then it is wisdom of the humblest and most unassuming kind, the wisdom of all creation, which goes hence unquestioning, without puzzling over the universe in which it lives and dies; the wisdom of the obedient. And if such thankful obedience to the unknowable is piety, then this is piety—but a piety that is wholly of this world. How much of the beauty of the Essays is due to the fact that their movement so truly describes the curve of life through ripeness and to death—the whole of life!

WHY did Montaigne write them? He himself posed the question over and over, without finding an answer. Yet we must believe his foreword: he did not write them for us. He wrote them for himself, for his own sake, out of inner necessity; and yet he needed the unknown reader in order to reveal himself to himself. Self-description was the instrument of his self-discovery. For, and this is the last contradiction, there is no self-knowledge which does not make itself known, and no truthfulness without communication. "Whoever does not live a little for others hardly lives for himself." The consciousness of self that remains mute and unexpressed cannot attain self-knowledge. Perhaps there lay, at the source of Montaigne's decision to write down his thoughts, the death of his friend, Etienne de la Boëtie, who shared with him common ideas and ideals. The Essays are the continuation of a broken-off conversation. The whole first period of the Essays is an echo of this intimate association of two humanistic minds, both in love with antique greatness and the wisdom of Stoicism. Now Montaigne was alone, bereft of that "other I" who "alone possessed my true image, and took it with him," and it was "as if I had been cut in half." But this lost image of himself which he tried to reconstruct was hardly the one that emerges in the Essays; the undertaking led him further than he had intended.

We can infer Montaigne's image from the portrait he sketches of La Boëtie; how impersonal, how declamatory in spite of all its real emotion, this essay is! We sense the humanistic enthusiasm for antique greatness "as our century no longer knows it" in which these two come together, the spirit of emulation of the Scipios and Catos which one finds also in La Boëtie's posthumous *Contr'un*. It was only slowly that Montaigne freed himself from the spell of that image of ideal manhood proposed by the Stoa, which was embodied for him in Etienne de la Boëtie. He cannot maintain himself on such heights—in such a role—alone, and the great generalities of virtue, truth, and freedom remain empty, for they find no echo. Hesitantly, in a few tentative thrusts, whose keenness for a late-Renaissance mind still filled with the spirit of antiquity we are hardly able to measure any more, he begins to question not mankind itself but these standards for mankind, and to seek the criteria of judgement within himself. And in shaping this new and quite personal image of man he attained his full reality. His book was the triumphant bursting loose of the free man from late-Humanistic epigonism. And through it, Montaigne himself became what he was. Montaigne noted finely the reciprocal process in which he and his book were engaged: "And even if no one were to read me, should I have wasted my time? I no more made my book than it has made *me*. . . ." His book has become a true collaborator, and

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through it the reader becomes one too—"my book," Montaigne says, as he would say "my friend," and, reading his book, we are drawn into this intimacy too. Whence the inexhaustible freshness which speaks to us from this book across more than three and a half centuries, as from no other book of his time, and few of all time.

In the end the richness of this book is the richness of the personality which shared itself with it, wholly and without holding back. It is not the monologue of a crank in his library, brooding over himself. The man who wrote this lived open-eyed among men caught up in the most merciless of civil and religious wars; he stood in his time with both feet, at the end of that colossal century in which the new world was discovered and the world of antiquity rediscovered, which saw the Christian church tottering on its foundations, and the anthropocentric model of the universe overturned, the century of the conquistadors and the great rebels: Cortez and Copernicus, Luther and Machiavelli, Calvin, Loyola, and Giordano Bruno.

The book, too, is of this time—and what a time! Montaigne began to write his essays in the year of the St. Bartholomew massacre, which gave the signal for slaughter throughout France, and entered history as the ineradicable symbol of betrayal, baseness, and murder in the name of the highest certainties of faith; the night of butchery in Paris, and of the thanksgiving mass with which it was greeted in Rome. All his life Montaigne saw religious war smouldering or blazing all around him, in his city, in his own family, and among his brothers and sisters, three of whom adhered to Calvinism. The twenty years during which he wrote the Essays were twenty years of civil war, hardly interrupted by the worthless peace treaties and edicts of toleration, broken before they came into force. Montaigne's retreat in 1571 "to the lap of the learned Muses, where he will pass in calm and security the days left him to live," was of short duration; the next year he was with the royal army in Poitou sent against rebellious La Rochelle, then bearer of the king's commands to the Parliament of Bordeaux, and in the following year we meet him again and again as agent and mediator between the warring camps. The news of his election as mayor of Bordeaux reached him on his "extended journey" in Italy, and King Henry III wrote to him in Rome to summon him to the immediate and pressing assumption of his office—a difficult one in a city torn by outer and inner quarrels, and become a storm-centre of the Huguenot wars.

But the Michel de Montaigne faithful to church and king was also the confidant and adviser of Henry of Navarre, the chief of the Protestant party, who visited him in his castle and appointed him, already chamberlain to Henry III, to be his own *ex officio* chamberlain too. An unelevating role, and one hard to understand, like the role of all those who issue no calls to battle and wage no wars, but seek to make peace instead; suspect, like all moderation; dangerous, like all will to balance in times of fanaticism. So Montaigne also passed, as he once complains, "for Guelf among the Ghibellines and Ghibelline among the Guelfs"—for a Papist among the Calvinists, and a heretic, or, what was almost the same thing, a lukewarm believer, among the Catholic zealots.

He has been called with justice, if also with some exaggeration, the philosopher of Henry IV, who brought peace and order to the French state, and to whom Montaigne, in one of his last essays, dedicated the verses Virgil wrote for Augustus. But if he was the philosopher of Henry IV, it was before the latter's victory, which he did not live to see. Montaigne had party loyalty, but it was not to the party of a dogma. His loyalty was to the old order, embodied in the monarchy which fell to pieces under the blows of both religious parties, the Calvinists as well as the Catholic League. If one wishes to range him with a party then it must be with the "*parti des politiques*," as his contemporaries called that "third force" made up of moderate and tolerant spirits which —hence its designation as "political"—drew a distinction between religious conviction and political practice.

When hereditary succession made the Protestant Bourbon, Henry of Navarre, heir to the throne of the weak and degenerate Valois, the

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split became open; while the Catholic League sought to deliver the crown of France into the hands of the Spanish Hapsburg, Philip II, or the Lothringian Duke of Guise, the legitimist party of "the politicals" became simply the patriotic party. But it was only by going over to the religious faith of the majority of his people that Henry IV could finally become the "prince of peace," the "good king" who has entered legend. For those sick alike of the oligarchic city-republics of the Calvinists and the caricature of democracy created in Paris by the League through the long reign of terror enforced by a fanaticised mob, the monarchy appeared as salvation. That the paternal and tolerant régime of Henry IV prepared the way for the absolute monarchy which less than a century later began to destroy his work, is part of the history of another epoch, which had gone on to new problems; for history knows no "solutions" by which everything works out as smoothly as in the arithmetic books and ideological primers, only the triumph of new formulations of a problem over the old ones, the replacement of the religious formulation by the political, and the political by the social —all of them, however, only new forms of the old. What Montaigne says of the political problems of his time is spoken out of that time and his personal experience: it is uncontemporary to us. And yet, in a far deeper sense, it *is* contemporary.

NOWHERE is politics the subject of this book. Nowhere does Montaigne draft an ideology or a programme of even the most modest kind; here too it is a question solely of *his* relation to politics and ideology. He was involved in these disorders as a citizen and an official, not as Michel de Montaigne, and the self-contemplation of the Essays is once again the means, in a time of ideological murder and carnage, to gain distance from the struggle, to come to himself, in the full sense of the phrase, to win the inner freedom that the party follower loses. In politics, too, it is a book of spiritual hygiene.

Here again scepticism above all fulfills its cleansing function. In the blackest impasse of the civil war, sharpened to ultimate bitterness by the betrayal of St. Bartholomew's Night, while the unity of the kingdom itself was for the first time put in jeopardy, and the "natural right" to rebellion and to execute kings was seized on in turn by Calvinist theoreticians and the zealots of the Catholic League, Montaigne read Sextus Empiricus' "Outline of Pyrrhonism," struck off his philosophical coat-of-arms, showing the arms of a scale poised in wavering equilibrium and the motto "*Que sais-je?*"; and began to set down his "Apology for Raymond Sebond," the only really polemic essay in his work. All certainties are overturned here, with a true lust for destruction and an undiscriminating insatiability, all dogmas reduced to mere opinion, illusion, and conjecture, one as good as the next and each a mere curiosity in the cabinet of human fantasy. Everything is reduced to one level, man and beast, wise man and fool, intellect and instinct, belief and delusion, science, speculation and old wives' tales, and every supposed certainty cancelled by mere confrontation with a dozen contradictory and just as evident certainties. Montaigne notes sarcastically that two hundred and eighty-eight sects arose in antiquity out of the dispute over the highest good alone, and Pascal later copied this remark into his *Pensées*. Religion too is brought into this sphere of mere human supposition, for "it is clear and distinct that we accept our beliefs only in our own fashion and from our own hands, just as other religions have been accepted," according to the accidents of place, birth, and education: "A different latitude, different parents, similar promises and threats, could have produced in the same way a quite contrary belief. We are Christian in the same sense that we are German or Perigordian. . . ." Curious defence of the good Sebond, who wished "to demonstrate the truth of our religion by the conclusions of reason!"

No one, probably, will ever succeed entirely in clarifying the strange labyrinth of this polemical piece, for Montaigne himself has taken pains to make sure that no one will be able to pin him down to anything—not even doubt. Perhaps such a mock battle, with reversed weapons, in which Montaigne undertakes to defend Sebond's proof of religion by

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reason while pushing reason (and all human certainties with it) into the void, was the only way in which a free spirit of that age could create room for itself to breathe between inexorably hostile dogmas—one thinks of the quite otherwise motivated, but very similarly constructed, *Defense of Herodotus* by Henri Estienne, which undertook to prove the credibility of the wildest fables of the ancient Greeks by assembling a selection of the even more grotesque miracle stories and fairy tales which the priests of his time had imposed on a credulous people. . . . Yet one need not therefore impute to Montaigne a case of plain fraud. Here, as everywhere in the Essays, the occasion and point of departure for the essay, Sebond's "natural theology," turns quickly into a mere pretext for following Montaigne's own thoughts down every sideway and bypath. Nor is it a question of simple enlightened denial or doubt of an article of faith. The possibility of divine revelation remains open to rare and chosen spirits; but it is clear that it is not these spirits who are drowning France in fire, murder, and warfare, while they battle for the mastery of the country. By themselves the genuinely religious would hardly be numerous enough to form a troop of militia. The others —and are these others not, in reality, all?—are possessed, not by the truth, but by blood-frenzy, greed, and hunger for power. If they weighed truly the fragility of their convictions, the uncertainty of their murderous certainties, if they were in possession of, instead of beside, themselves, would they not sheath their swords?

He too, Michel de Montaigne, belongs not at all to the graced who have received the light of holy truth; he too is a Christian like the multitude, as he is a Perigordian, by heredity and habit. It is for just this reason that he stands fast; precisely because he cannot decide by himself what the truth is, he holds to that truth which is his by birth—"and since I am in no position to choose, I follow the choice of others, and remain in the rut in which God has set me. For otherwise I would roll and roll without end. . . ." With this he contents himself, to this he clings, but modestly; it is a personal, historically limited faith, which makes no claim to be binding on those whom God has set in another track. "What sort of truth is it that ends on this side of the mountains and is a lie for the world beyond?" It is a rule of behaviour, a "local ordinance," to which Montaigne submits himself in his ignorance; blind, but conscious of his blindness.

So he rejects the Reformation, not as sin and error, but as disorder and a sectarian arrogance of spirit which presumes to pass personal judgement on what is ultimate truth; not because his certainty is better but because he knows the questionableness of all certainties. It would take passionate conviction to change his faith, but it requires only mild conviction to hold to the old one. All the more because Calvin's Genevan papacy was both more demanding and less tolerant than pre-Tridentine Catholicism—and the introduction of the Tridentine creed into France had long been successfully resisted by the Gallican *politiques*—which contented itself with external submission to churchly usage, and gave its approval to the Essays as a tract written in defence of the old faith, until a new wave of fanaticism, two generations later, repudiated as anti-Christian both the Essays and, characteristically, the religious tolerance of the Edict of Nantes. Of course, the zealots were not wrong. Montaigne was indeed, in Sainte-Beuve's pointed phrase, a good Catholic in the exact measure that he was a lukewarm Christian. He, personally, was prepared to let pass every belief and every superstition, "to light one candle to St. Michael and another to the dragon," and with Socrates he held that "the truest opinion of the supernatural is to have no opinion."

Montaigne's loyalty to the old faith does not therefore contradict his scepticism, it is grounded in it. He defended the hereditary church as a conservative, not as a fighter for the true faith; as a *politique*, not as a crusader against heresy. He did not put the light on one side and the darkness on the other, he reserved the freedom to look around him, and to see what became of his convictions in the fists and mouths of their defenders, "who believe they believe because they do not know what belief is," and to recognise the human qualities and

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virtues of their opponents. He speaks often, in the Essays, with curiosity and astonishment, of the strange phenomenon of party passion, that human loss of self in a "role" thanks to which men work themselves up over things which do not in the least concern them. "*Je m'engage difficilement*" is a key sentence of the Essays; he is "not easily inclined to belief nor to disbelief"; and the essay in which he reports how he exercised his mayoral office bears the magnificent title, "On the Management of the Will." His political ethos is the rejection of passion.

He refuses to be passionate even about the tradition he upholds. Every traditional form of order is an inheritance, and nothing else. Church, crown, state, law, family, and marriage are institutions which earn the esteem of a citizen in his role as citizen, but only in that role; they can claim no compulsion over his way of thinking or his conscience. What exists is neither holy, nor good, nor even reasonable; it has no other virtue but that it exists. Order, the state, law and justice are nothing else but disorder, lawlessness and violence, established and grown venerable by age, and often enough laughable, inhuman, and absurd. "The laws are not law, because they are just, but because they are laws." All human order is nonrational, neither derivable from, nor justifiable by, reason; every schoolboy is able to demonstrate its senselessness, but he had better let it stand: he knows nothing better.

For there is no rational order. Society has grown not out of the test tubes of reason but the disorder of history, not as an abstract logical construction for abstract logical men, but as an empirically discovered form of the living-together of human beings. For the state too, what is truth this side of the Pyrenees is a lie on the other. Like all historical reality it cannot withstand the scrutiny of reason, for it is grounded not on truth but on custom; and yet it is infinitely superior to reason, for it is actual. And the older and more customary it is, the better, for it has survived its violent birth pangs and found its inner equilibrium, it has shown its usefulness and vitality by its survival, and grown to be the normal state of affairs with which everyone is familiar, because he is born to them, and which therefore allow the highest measure of freedom. Whoever assails it risks a relapse into the rule of the fist. Montaigne's whole polemic against the "innovators" is an indictment of the power-pretensions of abstract reason in its attempt to create an order outside historical contingency, and he has only scorn for the ideal states of philosophy, which have no place and no time. Every idea which presents itself as an ideology and claims power over men as a universally valid principle of order, is *hubris* and folly, arrogant transgression.

But even to the existing order he did not concede the right to impair his private freedom: "If the laws I serve threatened me even with their little finger I would go immediately in search of others, wherever they might be. . . . I am so greedy for freedom that I would feel hemmed-in if I were denied access to no matter what corner of the Indies." He acquiesced in the external order precisely for the sake of this freedom: freedom, too, he drew to himself as *his* freedom, not as a public postulate; and practical conformity seemed to him a small price to pay in order to defend it. He played the part that was allotted him, in a bad time, as Frenchman, Catholic, Perigordian, citizen, and mayor of Bordeaux, dutifully and without passion, with calm acceptance of his historic "contingency," and thereby preserved the inner freedom to remain Michel de Montaigne, sceptic and citizen of the world. Thus this political attitude flows back into the self-knowledge from which it issued, into the open-eyed acceptance of that contradiction of freedom and obligation, individuality and conformity, in which Montaigne found his own nature—"So I am."

The best fruit of this self-possession is its absolute openness to other things and other men. This deeply liberal spirit was tolerant without that tinge of sufferance, of the magnanimous concession granted by Truth to Error, that so often clings to the word—a word Montaigne does not even know. This enemy of all ideology had an insatiable, unprejudiced curiosity about all ideas, this scorner of all pretensions to special knowledge had an unbounded readiness for learning, this sceptic in

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regard to every dogma was open to the whole endless variety of spiritual possibilities, the life-forms and life-truths of other men and other peoples, and he treated with respect even those possibilities which were closed to him. Willingly, playfully, he tests his capacity to assume another opinion and seek its justification, and it often happens that the game turns to earnest in the process, and he abandons his own to adopt the opinion he began by combatting.

To be sure, a great deal also escaped this mind, which grasped so much in the attempt to grasp itself. The soaring lights of inspiration, the mystic vision of the world, the passion for knowledge and perhaps passion itself he sensed only by imaginative intuition, without really experiencing them: the border forms of human existence, the seer, the hero, and the saint, like the radically evil, were foreign to him. The psychic phenomena of transport and ecstasy he traced in himself and others again and again, with a mixture of curiosity and aversion; but his whole effort is in the opposite direction: to come to himself, not to allow himself to be transported, to possess himself, not to be possessed. He found this way to himself not by negating, but by affirming what was outside his nature, by the affirmation even of what was to him foreign, mysterious, and incomprehensible.

This rare and precious faculty for setting himself in the place of another being and respecting its inner laws as equal to his own he pushed to its utmost reach: "When I play with my cat who knows if she does not amuse herself more with me than I with her?" All of Montaigne lies in that casual sentence.

TRUTHFULNESS is not only a great, it is a difficult, virtue. It demands not merely an open character but a clear head, and that, for a man of Montaigne's time, as for our own, was difficult indeed to achieve. Every time of disorder is also a time of disordered minds who know all about God and the world, the cause of things and their background, the meaning of history and the destiny of man—all about everything except themselves. And in such times nothing is more necessary than to come, in the spiritual and even in the clinical sense, to oneself. That is the spiritual hygiene Montaigne practised as his joyful wisdom, and his only teaching. "With him I would live," Nietzsche wrote, "if the task were set me to make myself at home on earth." It is just this task, perhaps, that we have all been set again.

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Michael Hamburger

Philoctetes

THE sky grows dumb, the seasons of my pain
Are not the mainland seasons.
Contracted in this wound my thought grows blind
And I blaspheme
Because the island of my wound is loud.
Now that I doubt this bow's divinity
I am the beasts I feed on, less than the birds
That only visit here, though here they fall
Pierced by my hated arrows.

Once I could picture archipelagos,
Prayed to the binding sea
To grant me news of those I left behind,
News of my father and of Heracles,
The living and the dead.
The sea grows dumb and I grow separate
Confined to Lemnos where the tide is pain,
A festering foot the seasons—
Now that I doubt this wound's divinity.

Once I could search the clouds for images,
Could strain my ears for some redeeming voice
Vouchsafed by Heracles—
The sun's blind eye moved in a labyrinth
And sparks of no great fire the stars went out.
No message, but the stillness of despair,
Dumb rocks, the deafened sea,
And every cry my separate agony,
Cacophonous echo in my stinking lair.

Wrong after wrong, the prowling cats of the sea:
Tricked by a mortal, here ends prophecy:
If by Odysseus' cunning Troy is taken
In godless peace Hellas will waste away—
Now numb, now sore—their fate
To live on Lemnos, long for Thessaly
Till in the glutinous air
No bird can break their seasons and no prayer
Travel towards the mainland of their pain.

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Raymond Rosenthal

Life and Letters in Rome

EVEN in the summer months, when a cloud of viscid, misty heat fills the hollow in which most of Rome lies, the tourists continued to pour in, terribly hot, terribly rushed, terribly bewildered and browbeaten by the time-table and the travel agencies and the flighty Italian temperament. Why did they come? Didn't they know that mid-summer Rome is an inferno? It didn't seem to matter. All these Danes and Frenchmen and Germans and Americans, trudging through the muggy museums and churches, packing the sweated sight-seeing buses, catching a wispy breath of air on the Pincio, had the satisfied look of people fulfilling a long-harboured wish: they had come to Rome to see, not merely the art-works and the architecture, but the Italians themselves, this fabulous race, the last on the European continent that still somehow manages to put on the show of enjoying life.

And what a show it is! For the Romans, cynical about everything else, hold on to at least one active faith: the conventions and rituals demanded by the concept of the *bella figura*. A true Roman would rather die than appear on the streets of his city dressed in shabby clothes, would rather go into exile than not give the public impression of being gay, unconcerned, and full of the pride (and too often, alas, the puffed-up importance) of his social position. On the Via Veneto during the evening *passegiata* those fantastically decked-out, opulent-looking men and women who float by must seem marvellous creatures to the dowdy Swiss, the fidgety Americans, the glum Germans staring at them from the ranked café tables; yet, for the most part, they are only stenographers and government clerks, the stinting middle-class keeping up the minimum of appearances. (This, of course, is the kind of conformism which the Italian liberal and left-wing journals never trouble to mention, for you can be sure that both editors and contributors, without being at all aware of it, are busy carrying out its manifold and rigorous dictates.)

But where are the poor, the ragged, hopeless poor of the neo-realistic films? It is perhaps the first question, at once understandable and cruel, the foreigner arriving at Rome asks. Generally, in the overwhelmingly bourgeois city that Rome is, the poor keep out of sight, they are invisible. There are the professional beggars, but the respectable poor, the unemployed and the aged, live mostly in shanty towns, clustering sadly all along the city's bleak periphery. But there is a much crueller question that the foreigner usually doesn't think to ask: how do these half-poor clerks, whom he can see, manage? The average government clerk (and Rome is a city of government employees) gets paid between 40,000 to 50,000 lire a month—about £30 to £34—on which he must support his family, provide for their comfort, schooling, and amusements, and still have enough left over to meet the inflexible requirements of the cult of the *bella figura*. He does it by that everyday, unsung heroism called "arranging"—a series of breath-taking feats of economy, all invisible, like the extremely poor, to the public eye. So, that obsessive, supposedly private murmur one hears in every Roman café is always the ominous counting and recounting aloud of the ever-insufficient lire. When I first came to Rome I thought, listening to this incessant whispering about money, that the entire city was engaged in financial speculation—a romantic notion in the face of the scrounging, nagging reality.

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This agony of scraping and scrimping tells us a lot about the primitive force behind the game of the *bella figura*; for if it were simply a matter of keeping up with one's neighbours, in the American fashion, or, in spite of straitened circumstances, remaining outwardly respectable, in the style familiar to the Englishman and German, the cult would blow up tomorrow. The real motive power comes from the Italian's love of pleasure, his naïve, shrewd, unrelenting quest for it, here, now, today, in this poor, worn-out, inherently insufficient world of his. In all classes, save for the class of the rich, the quest, and the heroic expedients to further it, goes on. It is the half-pagan religion that the Italians have made out of their Catholicism, the ineradicable hope that this world will offer to them those "good tidings" that the Gospels, which they rarely read and so can interpret as they wish, announced for once and all.

So throughout Italian life during these uncertain post-war years, the "arranging" habit has extended. From the lowest of peasant homes, where indeed it is immemorial, to the highest reaches of the state. Especially the state. Now that the governmental "arrangement," consecrated by the armistice, interrupted for a time by the Resistance, and then set up on its definitive working base by the Demo-Christians, is beginning to crack at all its hastily-cemented seams, it becomes quite clear that it was founded, despite De Gasperi's dogged, if uninspired integrity, on an infinitely complicated net-work of compromises. While for the workers, peasants, and white-collar classes the "arrangement" meant a continual nightmare of desperate devices to get by, for the land-owning and manufacturing classes it meant increased chances at profit-making and even greater chances to avoid paying the taxes on these profits. Afraid lest his party, itself an "arrangement" arrived at between hostile groups in the Catholic political community, might not weather the strain, De Gasperi was guilty of the enormous political error of not finally giving Italy a juster, more effective taxation system. As a result, the Communists were handed their most telling propaganda and during the recent election campaign they hammered away without let-up against the *forchetoni*—the big fork-wielders—who had made themselves fat in the Demo-Christian milieu, if not directly in the party's ranks. Nor did it help the Demo-Christians to retaliate by putting up posters showing the luxurious Parioli apartments where the Communist leaders lived—they are both right, many voters reasoned, and went in search of a less powerful, and therefore less corrupt, party for which to cast their votes.

De Gasperi, however, cannot be blamed for Italy's lack of any viable social standard, any conception of the citizen's obligation to the state; it was the legacy he inherited, that all Italian politicians inherit, and it represents the combined curse and blessing of the Italians throughout their modern history. The blessing is clear to all Europeans, you can see the wonder and envy and guilt on their faces as they pass through Rome on their interminable, pathetic pilgrimage: they all know that the Italians proved their humanity, above all states, in a way that no other belligerent nation on the Continent can boast. Indiscriminately, without thinking of the person's race, politics, or creed, the Italians sheltered and saved from prison and death thousands upon thousands of the members of other nations. But there is another matter, more disconcerting but just as vivid a testimony to the Italian's complicated humanity. While he was saving the hunted Allied soldiers and the victims of German racial persecution, the same Italian was busy killing, in that peculiarly private, vendetta-like war which the Italian Resistance became, thousands of his fellow-countrymen. In the region around Bologna alone, thirty thousand Italians fighting on both sides, Fascist Militia and Resistance, were killed, and all social intercourse has since been rendered impossible among the survivors. Unfortunately for all neat systems of moral accounting, I don't know where, under the curse or the blessing, to put this last enormity of a fact.

The curse, as always, is less complicated. Leopardi, writing one of his bitterest essays, dealt with it quite adequately some hundred and twenty years ago, and the gist of his argument

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still applies. The Italians lack any social standards, he explains, because they lost the ancient idea of glory but were alone among European nations in not finding a substitute for it in the shop-keeping virtues. Since Leopardi's day, all that the Italians have been able to invent to fill the gap has been the cult of the *bella figura*, which is the sole arbiter of custom—after they leave their homes. That last point is of the essence. Leopardi, naturally, hurries over it, and so he overlooks the one deeply rooted social form that the Italians have always possessed: the family. For, to quote a contemporary, equally bitter critic, the Italian is before all else "a ferocious, home-loving animal." The witticism sounds better in Italian, the sharp "*feroce*" clashing against the soft "*casalinga*," yet the English "ferocious" can very well serve to describe the inner reality of the stance, simultaneously hostile, wary, and overly polite, which the Italian assumes when he comes out of the warm nest of the family into the cold and dangerous outer world. It is this ferocity that ignites that highly coloured flare the tourists see on the Via Veneto—many mistake it for sex, but it is much more the tension of the fearfully alert social being. It is, indeed, the Italian defending himself, "his facts," in the pungently egoistic Italian phrase, and the facts are inevitably the intimate facts of the family, its practical interests and emotional ties. In other European countries the family exists to prepare its members for the social life outside; in Italy, however, the family exists to prove to its members that the social life outside cannot possibly compare in richness and interest with its own. And the anarchy of all social relations in Italy that stand outside the family's orbit is the sad proof that the family has always won.

And Fascism? The twenty long years that Italians tolerated the pomp and absurdity of a tin-pot dictatorship? Reserving all his social emotions for the family, suffering from a constant feeling of vertigo, of not knowing where he is in the social sense, the Italian was an excellent accomplice for a dictator. But his family-centred selfishness was only the passive aid; the active and enabling mainspring of Fascism was the cult of the *bella figura*. Mussolini was a remarkably shrewd analyst and exploiter of the weaknesses of his countrymen's character. He knew that within many of those "home-loving animals" there lurked a bully and a show-off, ferociously unsure of his status in society. Accordingly, his Fascism was propped up and perpetuated by the lavish distribution of titles: everybody was Somebody—Commendatore, Cavaliere, Madre della Nazione. Niccolo Tucci has brilliantly described the situation in an article published recently in the liberal weekly, *Il Mondo*, which treats, interestingly enough, not of the causes of Fascism, but of the character of a perennial type of Italian intellectual. "The Italians," he says, "are badly behaved socially, they do not have a sense of community, they are not, to invent an abstruse image, paving stones, but rather jagged pieces of pyramid that dig into your feet. Every Italian is an apprentice or an ex-future Pope, God, Emperor, Duce, Michelangelo Buonarroti, a peak that didn't quite make it. What he lacks only is a base, that is, a pyramid, and without it he is merely a poor devil crouching on the hard earth. And in order to put together that pyramid which can restore his lost future dignity to him, he requires a whole people, an empire. . . . Every person who respects himself has to have his victim; his subject, the *Ubi Consistam* of his self-importance." Tucci isolates here the relationship between the Italian's disillusioned intelligence, his suspicion of all governments, and his participation in so unintelligent and illusory an enterprise as Fascism. This sharp little portrait restores to the Italian his human proportions, making his adherence to Fascism real and understandable, though hardly less guilty and absurd. The tragi-comic circle was completed in that amazing scene which took place between Mussolini and the King as prelude to the Badoglio armistice; when the King informed him that Fascism was finished, that he must resign, the first words that burst from Mussolini's lips were: "But what is going to become of my family?"

In one of Count Carlo Sforza's books explaining the Italians to the world, he tells how he took the English Ambassador for a

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walk through the Trastevere region of Rome at that extremely shaky moment before the First World War when no one knew which way Italian sympathies would turn. Watching the families out for their evening *passeggiata*, sitting in tight, laughing groups at the tables of their out-door *trattorias*, the English Ambassador was properly impressed with the solidity of the Italian State. Sforza, a cultured and keen-minded man, undoubtedly started on this educative stroll thinking of the Roman dialect poet, Gioachino Belli, whose great sonnet sequence celebrates the family life of the Trastevere poor, but, unfortunately, he must also have had in mind the sentimental, socialist-tinged images from the vastly influential book by Edmondo De Amicis with the absolutely untranslatable title, *Cuore*. Sentimentality about the family is endemic to Italian literature, and each writer must wage his own war against it. Belli himself, that savage satirist, had his spells of uncertainty when he collapses into bathos at the sight of a mother begging for her starving children; but most of the time he can be counted on to side with the anti-sentimentalists.

How much Belli can be counted on and how central is his position in modern Italian literature has been emphasized during this past year by the publication of Giorgio Vigolo's brilliantly edited, definitive three-volume edition of the *Romanesco* sonnets. Twenty years of labour went into the editing, stubbornly carried on by Vigolo, a poet and music critic, through all the hardships of the war and post-war years. Just arranging Belli's 2,279 sonnets in their original chronological order, and providing them with notes, was an incredible task of scholarship; but Vigolo wasn't content to appear simply as a scholar and has prefaced his edition with a book-length essay that finally puts the dialect poet in his rightful place near the summit of Italian poetry. With his prophetic sweep Belli tried to solve each one of the difficulties that still plague Italian literature —the conflict between the written, official language and the spoken dialect, between liberal politics and the Catholic faith, between primitive, instinctual emotion and the constraints of polite society (and literature).

There is even a scandal mixed up with this publication of Belli's sonnets. In Eleanor Clark's book, *Rome and a Villa*, issued shortly before the Vigolo edition, the first full-length essay on Belli appeared, written in English by an American intellectual enamoured of Rome. It seems incredible that Miss Clark got there first. One explanation is that Fascism, for trumped-up reasons of national unity, frowned on and suppressed any interest in dialect literature. Whatever the cause, Eleanor Clark's essay, besides being an excellent introduction to the little-known Roman poet, also typifies the new situation thrust upon essentially provincial-minded Roman literary society by the post-war invasion of American and European intellectuals. The changed circumstances have not always been comfortable for the Romans, and their behaviour toward Eleanor Clark's enthusiastic book was decidedly cold. But Vigolo's edition arrived just in time to save Roman literary honour, and, though only indirectly, to polemicise against her American view of the poet.

In general Eleanor Clark's treatment of Belli is surprisingly in agreement with that of Vigolo's. The only point of difference derives from a characteristically American attitude, worth examining for that very reason. She regards Belli as an outlaw, which he was, but makes the mistake of imagining his outlawry in terms that have more to do with a Protestant situation of absolute break and exclusion than with the enclosing, intimate society of mid-19th century Papal Rome in which Belli lived and wrote. According to Vigolo, Belli had the peculiar position of an outlaw who was secretly honoured, even supported by the very society that ostensibly had cast him out—a typically Italian condition even today. "Belli must have felt at the same time rejected and protected in his clandestine existence," Vigolo writes, "yet not excluded completely from the city nor suppressed. At bottom he had in the Monsignors of the Curia his real public, his auditors, indirect perhaps, but nevertheless those who were best able to enjoy and understand him. The theological subtlety, the jokes continually composed on ecclesiastical motifs, not to mention a certain gross, fleshly character

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in the poet's carnality and shamelessness, turned to these priests as to a natural, specifically indicated audience."

Every modern Italian writer of interest sooner or later reveals a Protestant streak in his moral make-up, from Belli's savage revolt and Manzoni's milder Jansenist irony to the fatalistic pessimism of both Verga and Pirandello. Conflict, doubt, struggle have to be actively strived for in the lulling atmosphere of Italian culture; and if the writer has no taste for such combat, the settling-down into complacency and passive acceptance of the surrounding Catholicism is inescapable. What makes most of the Italian writers of the immediate pre-war period so unreadable is their air of enervating smugness; they write beautifully, too beautifully; they are intelligent, imaginative, humorous, but they lack that intensity which urges men to take sides in any significant moral and intellectual question. And Croce's dictum, "We cannot help being Christians," by assuring the intellectuals that the difficulty didn't exist, only strengthened their tendency to passivity. The easiest and most popular escape is into anti-clericalism, that political blind-alley constructed out of wrongly directed moral desperation.

But after the Italian writer has disposed in one way or another of these problems, there still lies in wait for him that prize headache, that confoundedly tangled, well-nigh insoluble poser: What language is he to write in? They are all in the intolerable position of a man who has inherited a fortune—the fortune of the dialects and the speech of every day—but cannot touch it and must scrape along on the worn-out resources of the official, literary language. (It is the economic situation reversed, though, if anything, more exasperating.) However, some writers of the *prosa d'arte* school, such as Antonio Baldini and Emilio Cecchi, did try to employ Belli's Roman dialect as an occasional, piquantly decorative frieze, always carefully ensconced in inverted commas, above the solid classical structure of their prose. But they were dilettantes; the real pioneer and master in the use of dialect was the powerful Sicilian novelist, Giovanni Verga. Though writing in clear, robust Italian, Verga saturated his sentences with the colours and rhythms of Sicilian dialect. His method was the brilliantly direct and simple one of genius; he accented his characters' speeches with the island's pithy proverbs, transposed and transported into literary Italian hundreds of sharp Sicilian epithets and turns of phrase, and, above all, transformed his novels by "dialoguing" everything, even the descriptive and narrative passages, so that you have the overpowering sensation of listening to the many-toned choral chant of a whole townful of Sicilian peasants.

The two contemporary novelists who have followed Verga's path—Cesare Pavese and Ignazio Silone—have been repaid for their courage and enterprise by being the most interesting writers in the present-day Italian literary scene. Since his death by suicide in 1950, Pavese's reputation has soared, and almost every important Italian critic has hurried his Pavese article into print. His publishers, amazed by his popularity, have manfully met the situation by issuing every scrap of his writing they could lay their hands on. His journal, *Il Mestiere di Vivere*, which has chiefly a dolorous documentary value, and a book of short stories rightly judged stylistically immature by the author himself, have been published during the last year. His success is owed, I believe, to two circumstances: his suicide, which invested his life and work with a tragic, symbolic significance for the younger post-war generation, and his meticulous artistry, which ensured him an enthusiastic reception from both the old guard critics interested in preserving the pre-war standards of the prose-poetry purists and the younger critics who wish to break with that very past.

Silone still awaits a critical appraisal in Italy. He has not passed the poetry test. Let me explain. Each Italian critic is equipped with a Croce-patented, fool-proof poetry detector, an ingenious device whose warning bell trills triumphantly in the vicinity of D'Annunzio (despite the Neapolitan master's disapproval), rings out with a brusque note near Verga, and stutters uncertainly over the engaging but so crude Svevo. But when the apparatus comes within a mile of Silone, it goes suddenly dead

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and the poor critics must proceed into unfamiliar territory empty-handed, feeling their way like blind men. No great wonder then that very few Italian critics have completed the journey, and the handful who did manage to get back safe and sound have embarrassingly little to report. It has gotten so bad that when Silone's latest novel, *A Handful of Blackberries*, came out at the end of last year, most of the reviewers behaved as though they were suffering from acute shock, mumblingly praised the novel for its perfect narrative structure, which didn't exist, and quickly tried to forget the whole affair.

I LINK these two writers, however, because I find in their work a common effort at weaving the strength and richness of their dialects into the texture of their prose. Pavese has been more successful in doing this than Silone, perfecting a wiry, vigorous style that effectively absorbs and intensifies the ordinary speech of a native Piedmont hill-town. All of his novels are "dialogued" in Verga's manner; but with the difference that Pavese places at the centre of his scene, instead of a town or a family, a lonely, usually foot-loose young man or woman, who tells the story and sets the dominant tone. Pavese was modest, but it was the modesty of an artist who shrewdly judged his intense but short-winded lyrical talent and developed a style which would serve as its most effective expression. The unfortunate thing is that Pavese's style presents unusual difficulties for the translator, since its entire quality in Italian is the penetratingly melancholy tone, established by an accentual employment of dialect. Improperly translated, Pavese can sound like a run-of-the-mill American naturalist.

The other important similarity that exists between Pavese and Silone is their concern, though from different standpoints and with different aims, with that central reality of Italian life: the family. Pavese's hero wants to reconstitute an ideal family, while Silone's hero, returning to his family as the prodigal revolutionary, wants to be permitted to convert it to his sense of justice. When Silone's hero fails with his family, he turns to a circle of friends to create a substitute for the family he wasn't able to recreate. Pavese's central character doesn't have a substitute, failure cannot be countenanced, and he would rather destroy all relationships—as he does in his two novels, *La Casa in Collina*, and *Fra Donne Sole* —than confess that his ideal relationship is impossible.

Silone keeps the family, which he both longs for and fears, at arm's length with a political discourse—an experience many of us have gone through. Pavese had no defence but his art, he was completely vulnerable. In a recent statement of his political faith, Silone has said that he wants to extend the "ethical impulse from the restricted individual and family sphere to the entire domain of human activity." Before he committed suicide, Pavese wrote in his journals that his adult life, in which he had already attained success and the love of friends, was worthless. His novels, with melancholy restlessness, create and destroy a whole series of "families," and life in Italy is unbearable outside a family.

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Rose Macaulay

Pleasures of Palaces

ALL over the world, palaces stand ruined. Crumbling palaces, shattered palaces, palaces engulfed by green forest, palaces drowned in the sea, palaces whose only remnants are a few prostrate broken columns, a sprawl of foundations, grass-grown, some mosaic floors, a swimming bath, fragments of wall painted in colours that were bright two thousand years ago. Palaces like Priam's, scarcely now to be identified among the rubbled trenches that were Ilium; palace castles like Santameri where the Frankish Dukes of Athens held their court at Thebes, of which one massive tower still stands, palaces like Sans Souci that a black king built at Haiti, palaces beneath the desert like Nineveh and Babylon, palaces beneath the sea like those of emperors round the Naples bay, palaces of the Caesars sprawled over the Palatine hill, palaces on Cyprus, where (says Dante) the Lusignan princes led a beastly life among the beastly Cypriotes, palaces huge and containing towns, like Diocletian's at Spalato, palaces at Delhi, Mistra, Tiryns, Mycenae, Persepolis, Peking, palaces rising out of lakes all about Rajputana, palaces built by Norman kings for their pleasure in Sicily, palaces covering twice five miles of fertile ground with walls and towers and domes of pleasure at Xanadu. Palaces everywhere; and more beneath the earth that we shall never see, so deeply over them have piled and silted the sands of Syria, the river mud of Sybaris, the brittle but immobile cities of the world.

In ruined palaces there lies peculiar pleasure. The grandeur they had, the courtly life led in them, the banquets, the music, the dancing, the painted walls, the sculptures, the rich tapestries, the bright mosaics, the princely chatter, the foreign envoys coming and going, the merchants laying their costly bales before the royal treasurer—and now the shattered walls, the broken columns, the green trees thrusting through the crumbling floors. Fallen pride, wealth and fine living in the dust, the flitting shades of patrician ghosts, the silence where imperious voices rang, the trickle of unchannelled springs where fountains soared, of water where wine flowed. All this makes for that melancholy delight so eagerly sought, so gratefully treasured, by man in his brief passage down the corridor of time, from which, looking this way and that, he may observe such enchanting chambers of the past.

Of all palaces, the palace at Xanadu (one must keep Coleridge's euphonious name for it), that stately pleasure-dome on the river Alph, a hundred and eighty miles northwest of Peking, that miracle of rare device set in green forests and gardens of incense-bearing trees, with the sacred river meandering with mazy motion five miles through them to the sea, is the most dream-like. Indeed, all that most of us know of it comes through a dream. And, if you travel to see it now, all you will find standing of the forest city of Xanadu or of its seven-hundred-year-old palace that was the summer residence of the mighty Kublai Khan, will be one of the six 13th century gates in a fragment of wall. Some years ago there was more. Two Englishmen from Peking visited it in 1872; they found a deserted site, overgrown with weeds and grass, standing above the marshy river's bed. The walls still stood, forming a double enceinte; the inner line defined the area of the palace; it had three gates, of which one, a great arch in the south wall, was intact. The outer wall had six gates. Within the walls were

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foundations of buildings, blocks of marble and fragments of sculptures; all the débris of a once flourishing city. It stood in a space which must have been a park, and which covered about five square miles. Inside the park, said Marco Polo, who served Kublai in his summer palace for years, there were fountains and rivers and brooks, and beautiful meadows with all kinds of wild animals; the woods and rivers and fountains are all gone; there only remain on the desolate land the wild animals and a small lama monastery.

And of the palace, a few fragments and a mass of buried foundations. We can build up the palace in imagination, as Coleridge did, from Marco Polo's account. "You come to a city called Chandu, which was built by the Khan now reigning. There is at this place a very fine marble Palace, the rooms of which are all gilt and painted with figures of men and beasts and birds, all executed with such exquisite art that you regard them with delight and astonishment. Round this Palace a wall is built, inclosing a compass of 16 miles. . . ." In the park the Khan had another palace built of cane, which could be taken down and moved from place to place; it was gilded all over, and rested on gilt and laquered columns. Kublai spent three months of each summer at this park of his, dwelling sometimes in the marble palace, sometimes in the cane, and all the summer he drank the milk of his brood of pure white mares, and his enchanters, when he sat at table in the palace, caused cups of wine to be set before him without human hand. The palace stood among a throng of temples, courts, pavilions and domes, and the green forest arched about them. There remains of it one gate and a poem.

THERE is more of the imperial palaces on Mons Palatinus, which gave its name to all palaces. The palaces of the Caesars sprawl over three hills, Tiberius overshadowing with his great mansion the modest house of Augustus, Caligula extending the Domus Tiberiana till it overlooked the Via Nova, Nero creating his gigantic Golden House after the fire, Vespasian beginning and Domitian completing the series of magnificent halls that toadying contemporary poets and admiring posterity have compared to Olympus, Hadrian building his exquisite palace that the mighty structures of Severus swallowed up—all of them fallen into ruin by the 7th century, progressively wrecked and buried deeper through the Middle Ages, whose writers called the whole lot collectively the *palatium maius*, and whose robber barons set on their foundations their castles and towers, till the Farnesi took them in the 16th century and laid on them great gardens; and all down the centuries they were battered to pieces, quarried, plundered, and buried in débris, until the hill was a shapeless mass of shrubbed ruin, to be at last explored and excavated in the 19th century. Today the different palaces are identified and named, the identification varying from decade to decade, so that some confusion reigns. Of some there remain scarcely any visible vestiges; of others, rows of magnificent arches and vaults, broken columns, massive sub-structures and terraces and fragments of wall, loom upon the hillside and valleys among the jumble of other ruins—temples, libraries, porticoes, houses and baths—in shattered majesty still beautiful in spite of their spoliation, and in spite of the stripping from them of much of the vegetation that gave them once the aspect of a jungle-buried city.

Behind the rugged beauty of the ruined arcaded piles standing formidably among greenery, there rise the shadowy palaces in all their glory, one imposed like a palimpsest on another as each age shifts into the next. There lies the Palatine of the late republic, the aristocratic quarter of Rome, the resort of rich and famous Romans, set about with commodious and elegant villas; here Cicero had his house, "*in conspectu totius urbis*," surrounded by his friends and enemies (Clodius had a house just above his, and Catulus was round the corner) and in easy reach of the Forum: Cicero's life, as we know, was spent in almost continuous travel from one of his villas to another and he pretended to prefer the country life of Tusculum, Antium, Tivoli, Cumae or Baiae, or the provincial gaieties of Pompeii, to the bustle of Rome; but in Rome he lived while engaged in public business, and on the Mons Palatinus he breathed good air and had a fine view of the

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city; his *Palatina praenesta* was "*in pulcherrimo urbis loco*," and we know pretty well where it stood and what it was like. Clodius destroyed it in malice, and its site was swallowed up later by the palace of Caligula. This cloud-capped palace stands, on the high arches we still see, looking over the Via Nova, sumptuously decorated with the glories of Hellenistic art. A flight of steps runs up from the street to the highest storey; a bridge is flung across the valley passing over the Forum and joining the Palatine to the Capitol; through the temple of Castor and Pollux the emperor passes from his palace to take his seat between the statues of the divine twins and receive the adoration of the crowds below; the palace, shining in marble and painted stucco ornament, is a warren of galleries, stairways, corridors and halls; about it Caligula capers and struts, mad, naked, or dressed up as a god, a warrior, or a charioteer; before he is thirty he is to be a shrieking, murdered ghost.

On the great arcades topped by Farnese trees rises the shadowy image of the Domus Tiberiana, the earliest of the great palaces, for the house of Augustus was a modest, delicately lovely dwelling, scarcely to be called a palace. Tiberius's palace is a fine building, full of gracefully decorated rooms. But it is put in the shade by Nero's Golden House, built in the open spaces made by the great fire of A.D. 64. Like a country villa, it spreads over a huge region, surrounded by meadows, vineyards, woods full of wild creatures, "to resemble a wilderness," says Tacitus, and a lake as large as a sea, with buildings on its shores; it steals, complains Pliny, half Rome, lying across the plain between the Palatine and Caelian and the Esquiline. We see the palace as Suetonius describes it; triple porticoes a mile in length, its walls overlaid with gold, jewels, and mother-of-pearl, banqueting halls vaulted with ivory ceilings which scatter on the guests unguents and flowers as they sup; the chief supper room is circular, and perpetually revolves like the celestial bodies. The baths are fed with water from the sea. At the entry to the palace stands a colossal statue of Nero, one hundred and twenty feet high. He should have died hereafter, for he had unfinished mighty works in hand, such as a pond into which should flow hot streams from Baiae, and he hoped to find in Carthage the treasure hidden by Dido there. However, he admitted to his architects that he now had a dwelling fit for a man. Alas that we can only see it with the eyes of imagination. As we gaze at the grandiose, arrogant, glittering structure, magnificently lying in its wooded spaces, it melts and changes into the great palace of the Flavians which replaced it. Domitian's palace is one of the most famous in history; it was not inferior, said the poets who were invited to sup there, to Olympus, but still inferior to the emperor who entertained them. As to Statius, his head was altogether turned after his first banquet in that noble hall.

"I seemed to be feasting in the heart of heaven with Jove, taking from the Trojan's hand immortal wine. . . . Ruler of the world, great father of the conquered globe, hope of mankind, darling of the gods, can it be that I behold thee as I recline? Is it *thou*? And dost thou suffer me to see thy face hard by at the board over the wine . . .?"

The tables were of Moorish citron-wood, set on pillars of ivory; but when we are hoping for further description of the décor of the supper room, the over-excited poet only raves of the glory and beauty of his god-like host. Bianchini, who excavated the hall for the Duke of Parma in 1722, tells of marble-inlaid walls, Corinthian columns wonderfully worked, colossal statues in basalt, columns of *giallo antico* on either side of the door, and a great marble threshold. The triclinium has a pavement of coloured marbles; the windows open on fountains, cascading coolly for the pleasure of the reclining guests. An immense peristyle with pillars of porta santa and walls polished to reflect approaching enemies, where the emperor took his walks in well-justified apprehension, opens out of the chain of sumptuous halls. To the south-east is the *domus augustana*, the part of the palace used as the emperor's private residence; it used to be supposed the palace of Augustus; its porticoed façade looks on the Circus Maximus. Its grandiose, complicated structure is still being progressively discovered.

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Those of us who grew up believing Octavius Augustus to have dwelt in this magnificence miss him from the pompous scene; one would rather see him there than Domitian catching flies. But Augustus, it now appears, dwelt in the *casa di Augusto*, that used to be *detto* the House of Germanicus, and after that was *detto* the *casa di Livia* (and indeed by some still is). If so, one likes him the better, and it is the better also for us, since this house is still beautiful, and the best preserved of the desirable residences on the Palatine. With palaces and temples perishing all round it, burying it, as time went on, under piles of earth and ruin, this exquisite dwelling was never quite destroyed, either by fire or by rebuilding emperors; when it was excavated in 1869 the lower storey still had its wall paintings and its friezes, preserved in the darkness of centuries of oblivion. The painted decorations are most lovely, even now, when blurred and defaced by mis-handling, clumsy excavation and restorations, and the fading caused by exposure to bright light. When first excavated, the colours must have been radiantly beautiful; Hellenistic art in the second style of Pompeii, but even better than anything found there. There are graceful festoons of fruit and flowers, friezes of winged figures and arabesques, country views, gardens, fountains and Roman streets framed in elegant cheating windows, fluted pillars painted on red walls, and scenes from mythology. The sala di Polifemo has, on two of its walls, a painting of Io, Argos, and Hermes, much blurred since its discovery, and another of Polyphemus pursuing Galatea through the sea; this has almost entirely disappeared; we only know it from photographs and paintings made just after the excavation; it is a melancholy loss, for its grace and spirit and colour must have been exquisite. Through a transparent blue-green sea, whose reaches wind back between hills, the burly Cyclops, a little Eros on his shoulders, wades breast-deep after the white-bodied nymph riding a prancing sea-horse and turning back on her lover a bland gaze of unconcern, while her two companion nereids, waist-deep, look on and mock the clumsy shepherd. It is the gayest and prettiest of Theocritan idylls; and to look at the poor reproductions which are all we have to recall it is a melancholy business; its death was so unnecessary. The pictures seem to have been by Greek artists, and were probably after famous Greek originals.

After this enchanting house, the tremendous arches and vaults that supported the palace of Septimus Severus—or were they, as is now suggested, only baths?—seem clumsily magnificent, with a picturesque grandeur almost medieval. Here, indeed, the Roman barons of the Middle Ages set their castles; and its ruins stood up through the centuries above the encroaching earth that buried the rest of the *palatium maius*. From the terrace above the arcades one can see all Rome, and half the Campagna; on a clear day, the Alban hills, Frascati, Castel Gandolfo. This—if palace it was—was the last of the imperial palaces. But it is such stuff as dreams are made on, and, like the baseless fabric of this vision, the cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces, dissolve as we look, leaving only wracks behind.

Engulfed among the huge structures of Severus are the few remains of the palace of Hadrian; and work is still in progress underground among the foundations of the Flavian palace, excavating a labyrinth of halls, mosaic pavements, rooms decorated with frescoes and arabesques. There seems, indeed, no end to the *palatium maius*.

MORE delicious are the amenities of the palaces and villas that crowd the gulf of Naples, the Phlegraean fields so beloved of patrician Romans, poets, statesmen and emperors, the *optandosque sinus*, the *blandissima litora*, of *aestuantes Baiae*, the Sorrentine hills beloved of Bacchus, the shores where Roman *honos* and Greek *licentia* so happily mixed (*deversorium vitiorum*, growled Seneca), the famous spa where every one in Rome who was anyone had his villa or his palace to retire to from the Roman dog-days. We see their ruins now, or many of them; scattered down the mountains that run down to the sea, themselves too running into the sea, *villes englouties*, drowned as well as wrecked, for some who lacked enough room on the shore (so great was the competition for house-space) thrust out, as Horace jeered, into the sea, "and met there the

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freshness and salubrity of another element": but the cause of their drowning was that the shores of the bay, so often convulsed by volcanic commotions, sank twenty feet below their old level, so that, crossing the bay, "you will sail over ancient villas, you will discern deep under your boat, a branch of the Domitian way," wrote Joseph Forsyth a century and a half ago; and, as Lucretius wrote, nineteen centuries earlier,

"*multae per mare pessum*
Subsedere, suis pariter cum civibus, urbes."

Fynes Moryson, in 1594, thought Baiae is "most sweete";

"but all the houses neere to the shoare are drowned, except the Baths, and the houses on the mountains are all ruined . . . yet these ruins show the pride and magnificence of that old time. . . . All this Territorie, on both sides neere this Creeke or Bay of the Sea, are so full of ruined Palaces, Temples, and Sepulchres, as a man would say, they were not several villages, but one great Citie. . . ."

Pliny said the same of the coast near Ostia where his Laurentum villa stood. One gathers that the whole Mediterranean coast of Italy was crowded with resorts and fine villas; the bays of the Naples gulf being the smartest, and, because of the mineral springs, the most salubrious. Here were the palaces, and the great baths, and here, as John Evelyn said, "the sweet retirements of the most opulent and voluptuous Romans." George Sandys, visiting the elegant bay in 1610, mused pleasurably on the ruins, the opulence, and the vice.

"A declaration of the magnificency and riches of the Romans; but too much of their luxury; beautified with ample temples, multitudes of Bannias, Imperial Palaces, and the adjoining Mannor-houses of the principal Romans. . . . They forced the sea to retire, and afford a foundation for their sumptuous buildings . . . Egyptian Canopus was a school of virtue, compared to the voluptuous liberty of this City. The Inn (saith Seneca) and receptacle for vices: where luxury taketh the reins. . . . What a sight it is to see drunkards reeling along the shoar; the banquetings of such as are rowed on the water, the Lakes reckoning their continual canzonets and the like. . . . One winter only here enfeebled Hannibal, and the delights of Campania did what the snow and the Alps could not do; victorious in arms, yet by vices vanquished. . . ."

Harlots, he mused, sailed by in painted boats of diverse colours, the lake was strewed over with roses, the night noises of singers would have displeased Cato. But see what happened to Baiae.

"*Baiae*, not much inferior to *Rome* in magnificency, equal in beauty, and superiour in healthful situation, hath now scarce one stone left above another, demolished by War, and devoured by Water. For it would seem that the *Lombards* and *Saracens* in the destruction hereof had not only a hand, but that the extruded Sea hath again regained his usurped limits: made apparent by the paved streets and traces of foundations to be seen under water. The shore is all overgrown with bushes and myrtles, the vaults and thrown down walls inhabited by Serpents: and what is more, the air heretofore so salubrious is now become infectious and unhealthful."

Palaces, fish-ponds, lampreys, baths, swimming pools on the tops of houses, all were perished, leaving only their ruins under water or hill-side. Here in these villas were held the house parties of the political and literary intellectuals; the gatherings and the topics discussed recall Falkland's house parties at Great Tew. Near Cumae are the ruins of Cicero's villa, and that of his friend Catulus, and a little way off was the house of Varro, which Cicero made the setting of the first Dialogue of his Academica; the second was held at Hortensius's villa at Bauli, of which we see the ruins beneath the sea; here Hortensius had his cisterns of lampreys, which, says Martial, came when called by name, and on which Antonia the wife of Drusus (who, says the elder Pliny, was never known to spit) hung golden ear rings. Here, too, wicked Nero planned the murder of his mother by drowning (which she foiled on that occasion by swimming too well), and here Cicero and Catulus and Lucullus, seated in Hortensius's colonnade, discussed philosophy, logic, and what have you until it was time to sail for Naples and Pompeii

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across the smooth evening bay before the breeze from the peach-red west. The modern village of Bacoli is built among the vast scattered ruins of this villa. But the ruins scattered all round the bay of Pozzuoli and Baiae down to the promontory of Miseno are mostly indistinguishable, a huge jumble of the patrician homes of the noblest Romans on holiday. The famed house of Lucullus, which later passed to Tiberius, sprawled over the cape in its huge and extravagant grandiosity, half of it under the sea.

"In the course of a few minutes," said Forsyth, "you sail past the highest names of antiquity. You see Marius, Sylla, Pompey, Piso, Tiberius, Nero, all crowding in for the most beautiful angles and elbowing each other's villas. Yet where are those villas now? Alas! nothing but masses of built tufo which you can hardly distinguish from the tufo of the hill."

Evelyn, who wisely accepted what he was told by guides, had the pleasure of feeling sure which ruin had been which villa or palace; he "rowed along towards a villa of the orator Cicero, where we were showed the ruins of his Academy, and at the foot of a rock, his Baths"; he even believed that he saw the Elysian fields, "full of myrtles and sweet shrubs, and having a most delightful prospect towards the Tyrrhene Sea."

But, though Virgil's traditional tomb on the cape of Posilipo has fallen into discredit, we can even today, climbing to the top of the promontory, see and accept without question Pausilypum, the great palace villa of Vedius Pollio, whose ruins cover the whole headland and drop down into the sea, jutting up from the water in huge fragments and blocks. It must have been the most palatial villa of all this palatial coast; it was bequeathed to Augustus. Vedius Pollio, despite his pleasure-palace, one cannot think of with pleasure, for he threw slaves into the lamprey stews to be devoured. Alas, there is always, or nearly always, something in the past of ruins which displeases, and probably one should not know too much of their late owners. Of the imperial palaces down this golden coast and on its islands, those of Nero, Caligula, Tiberius and the rest, there remain a few temples, great baths, cisterns, the fragments jutting from the sea, and the seaweed-green pavements dimly seen through clear blue water. You can still swim about among palace walls, though now you have to hire a cabin and swim from a crowded bathing beach or rocks brown with sprawling bodies. For more than ever *aestuantes Baiae* draws crowds from the hot cities to the *blandissima litora*, where Boccaccio's Fiammetta was taken by him to be cheered when she was pining of love. He retailed to her its delights—"by ancient Cuma and Pozzuolo is the delightful Baiae above the sea shore, than which there is nothing more beautiful or more pleasing under the sky. There are beautiful hills covered with trees and vines . . . the oracles of the Cuman Sybil, the lake of Averno, the theatre of the ancient games, the baths, Monte Barbaro, the vain works of the wicked Nero; which ancient things, new to modern minds, are no small cause of joy to see and wonder at."

Fiammetta, foolish girl, pining of love, cared for none of these things. But, all down the ages, Italians and foreigners have rejoiced in them, agreeing with Evelyn that here is "doubtless one of the most divertissant and considerable vistas in the world" and full of the most stupendous rarities. To the ancient Roman and Italian enthusiasm for scenery, hills, woods, coast and sea, there has been added a pleasure they did not know, swimming among ruined palaces; for—*mira fides*—they did not go in much for bathing in the open sea, and the palaces were not yet in ruins. On the other hand, the coast was far more beautiful, being unspoilt by tram lines, industrial towns, and the sordid spread of Naples.

Palaces come and go. One of the more dubious is the palace that Trajan is said by some archæologists to have built beside his new Ostian port. Its discovery was romantic. In 1870 or so a workman chasing a badger found a hole. It was like the discovery of the Lascaux caves; how many more holes in the earth, if penetrated, will lead us to subterranean chambers of antiquity? One gets to feel that no hole should be left unprodded, and that a whole world of palaces, painted caverns, mosaic

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floors, pillared chambers, strewn perhaps with exquisite sculptures, bright with delightful mural paintings, lies beneath our feet awaiting our spades. Anyhow, this Ostian workman prodded his hole with a stick, removed a few large stones, and saw through the opening a spacious hall. Incurious contadino, caring only for badgers, he did not, it seems, penetrate further; but he gave information of his strange find, and M. Texier, who was studying the alluvium of the Mediterranean rivers for the French government, arrived and entered the underground hall and was overcome with wonder.

"Within this first ray of light, penetrating depths where darkness had reigned for centuries, fluttered a whole world of insects who had taken up their abode there; it illumined the stalactites hanging from the roof, and the pools of water shining on the floor. This hall led to another, and that to others again. There were so many," said M. Texier, "and they were so vast, that in order to find one's way in the darkness one had to guide oneself by means of a compass, as one does in a virgin forest."

Excavations were begun, but ill carried out, with the sole object of finding and removing objects of art for the museum; this done, the ruins were covered up. The only man allowed to see them before they were reburied was Signor Lanciani, who described them as having splendid halls, baths, temples, a small theatre, and a huge portico. Today, less romantically, they are described as probably a warehouse. *Sic transit gloria palatium*: but, while its palatial status lasted, it gave extreme pleasure to M. Texier, Signor Lanciani, Prince Torlonia who had it excavated and extracted its objects of beauty, and "the rough peasant who guided Signor Lanciani," uttering cries of admiration the while.

PALACES should be exquisite in death, like the Porphyrogenitus palace in the walls of Byzantium, like the Blachernae palace in the northern corner of the city, like the great chain of imperial palaces disintegrating through the centuries in its western tip. Or like the small ruined palaces that stand in decay in formal grottoed gardens and parks about South Germany and Austria, or the great disintegrating palaces of Russian noblemen, mouldering and discoloured beside artificial lakes, green with weed, used for stables and agricultural implements and lodgings for workers, the windows fallen in. Or the sombrely truculent baronial fortified palaces that range down Italy from north to south and from east to west: castles or palaces, the distinction is nice, they served for both. Or, more delicate, more palatial, the for ever dying, for ever vanishing palaces of China; or the broken-domed Byzantine shells, with their dim fading wall paintings, where the Despots reigned on Greek hills.

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Raja Rao

India—A Story

NEVER was the Luxembourg so beautiful as on that fragile spring day. March had come and gone boisterously, cold winds blew in April, and then the immense sunshine came. The pools were transparent, the sky full of ochre clouds, the trees cut through the air with their leaves, the earth was hot. Men came out, old men with coughs and whiskers, and sat by the ponds reading newspapers. The old, fat women removed their kerchiefs and spoke garrulous words. The Sorbonnard girls opened their blouses to let the cool air breathe down them, single silver bangles on their wrists, and cigarettes held lighted in the air. They read D'Alambert or Henri Becque, while the young men basked in the sun, and slept.

The children scampered all over the park. I sat under Anne of Austria (1629–1687?) grey, big-headed, big-bosomed—some old tragic royalty bulging with posthumous importance. My thoughts were about morganatic marriages, U.N. statistics, parks and books, and the *chocolat chez Alsecia rue d'Assas* whose taste would not leave my mouth. The cold wind blew over my chest, and I sat up. A child of five or six, pink-skinned and clear-eyed, was dragging a wooden camel along the path.

"Where are you going?" I asked.

"To the oasis of Arabia," he said, and stopped.

"Where's that?" I asked, trying to see whom he was with. A woman, under a tree—his nanny no doubt—was standing, her arms round the peeling trunk of the oak. A young man, in kepi and Sunday shine, stood by her, at once disconsolate and happy. He hoped spring would remove his sorrow.

"Speak to the Monsieur, Pierrot," she cried, so as to have more time with the young man.

"You know where your oasis is?" I asked.

"Oh, yes, the oasis is all water, and big like this. My camel goes there to drink."

"Let's go there," I said. He stopped me, turned back furtively to his nanny, and then suddenly, "Look, you've faces in your buttons. Ah, faces, faces," he said, and gazed up at me. He did not know whether to come forward or not, his hand upraised, holding the string of his camel.

"You've faces in your buttons," he repeated and laughed.

"Speak to the Monsieur," cried the nanny. Her tone of voice was growing lighter. Pierrot started to say something. Then he suddenly fell silent. His camel needed a better string.

"I am called Raja," I said, just to say something.

"You've faces in your buttons," he said coming nearer, as though the mention of my name had reassured him. But looking up again, he saw my face and stopped. He was silent. Again he looked back, and his nanny had slipped behind the tree.

"Look," I said, and showed him my gold buttons. I wore my *sherwani* and my gold buttons were bright in the sun.

"Faces, faces," he said, and laughed, looking into my eyes. Then he looked very thoughtful.

"Speak to the gentleman. Be nice to him," shouted the nanny warmly, as though it were a song she was singing. The wind blew hard. The child came behind me, his hands clenched self-protectingly. Yellow plane-leaves fell. At the Medici-fountain, the water purred in the wind. I felt as though I could count each drop.

"Where is Arabia?" I asked.

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"Arabia," said Pierrot, "Well, it's where there is a lot of sand, and a Prince who rides a horse of gold."

"And the camel?"

"The camel is a friend of his Princess. When she goes to see the Prince. . . . No, come, my camel is called Kiki."

"And your Princess?"

"She's called Katharine."

"And her Prince?"

"Rudolfe. Kiki is the wedding present that the King of Arabia gave to Katharine. Kiki is from Ethiopia."

"And you, Pierrot, were you at the wedding?"

"Of course, I was at the wedding. There's a wedding every day. Every day there is a wedding in the oasis."

PIERROT came and sat on my lap.

"And what is it you see at the wedding, Pierrot?"

"Rudolfe comes on a white horse, and covered with white gold. And Katharine on the red camel, and her clothes are blue, the same as the clothes of Saint Catherine, you know. And they meet in the oasis."

"And what happens then?"

"Why they kiss each other. And then they say 'Adieu.' I'm going to the oasis."

"And could I come and see them—your Prince and Princess, Pierrot?"

"Wait, I'll ask them," he paused a moment. Then he said, "Come. The Prince and Princess are happy to see you at the wedding. You're going to show them those buttons with the faces in them?" He stopped, then asked:

"And you. Are you a Prince?"

"Oh, yes," I said.

"You are a Prince. Oh, yes I know it. I do know it, you know. You are a Prince. And what is your name?"

"I am called Raja," I said.

"Raja is what they call you," he said, trying to pronounce my name slowly, and to understand.

"Yes," I said. "It means a Prince."

"Then you are like Rudolfe. Rudolfe is the Prince of the oasis and of Arabia. And you?"

"Of India."

"And where is India?"

"Oh, far, very far," I said, looking across the tree tops to the sky.

PIERROT was taking me to the pool. The nanny was happy with the young man. Pierrot never looked back.

"Far, very far," he repeated. "And is there much sand in your country?"

"No, not much sand. But there are big forests."

"What is that, Monsieur, Monsieur . . . Prince, a forest?"

"A forest, well: it's lots and lots of trees."

"Oh, you're dressed just like a Prince."

"A Prince from India," I said.

Then we came to the central pool amidst the delphiniums. There were many, many children. Pierrot walked among them as though he were going on a long journey. He was going somewhere very far, far, far as that Avenue de l'Observatoire, full of great forests of trees, pools and big buildings and rippling sunshine. The sun shines there. The moon is big there. There are many birds, all blue and sometimes transparent. There are many clouds. And the camels there are never thirsty.

"And camels—are there many in your country?"

"Oh, we've elephants," I said.

"An elephant—an elephant," said Pierrot with much satisfaction. Meanwhile the nanny and her young man had come to the steps. The wind blew, and in the pool the boats raced one against the other, going to many lands, dashed against one another, fell on their sides, and rose up, and nobody was hurt or angry, because the sun shone.

"Your country—you get there by sailing ship?" he asked.

I said, "No. One goes there on steamers. One goes night and day, and for fifteen days. Then one comes to India."

"India," he repeated. He left the camel on the gravel. He sat by the pool, thinking.

"And you? Have you a Princess?"

"Yes," I said. "I even have two. They are not princesses. They are goddesses. One on my right hand and one on my left hand."

"One on your right hand, and one on your left hand. They are goddesses."

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"Yes."

"What is a goddess, a goddess, Monsieur le Prince?"

"Ah, goddesses, well: they are ladies with four arms and a golden crown on their heads, and the water of the Ganges, all sweet with perfumes, runs at their feet."

"And you have two of them?"

"Yes," I said. "One for the wedding of the night, and one for the wedding of the day. One who is dark as the bee, and the other who is blonde as butter."

"One is like dreaming. The other like waking up." He understood. He became silent. Then:

"And they ride elephants." He smiled to himself. Now, he really understood. He went on:

"They go down to the oasis, and they drink water."

"No, not to the oasis," I said. "But to the rivers."

"And the wedding—there is a wedding every day?"

"Two weddings a day—one by the light of the sun and the other by the light of the moon."

"And the goddesses—they come riding on camels?"

"No, I told you, they ride elephants."

"Yes, yes. They ride elephants. Two goddesses and they ride elephants."

"And then there is the river."

"Pierrot," shouted the nanny. He sat there looking at me as though he did not hear.

"Pierrot," she shouted again. "What's happened to you?"

"Jeannot, I am with the Monsieur," he shouted back, without looking at her. "And I ride an elephant, I'm going to the elephant country. There are goddesses there—two goddesses." He looked up at her as she came over.

"What's happening to you anyway?"

"I am going to the country of Monsieur."

"Look," she reproved him, "look at your Kiki. Look what you do with your animals."

PIERROT was quiet for a moment. Then he said, "There's a river there too."

I said, "Yes, Pierrot."

"And no oasis?"

"None."

"Kiki," he said, "you like the oasis. And there you are," he cried, and threw it into the pool. Kiki kicked up her legs and sank without a cry. Kiki went down to the bottom, and ships passed over her. Pierrot looked at the boats, borne by the wind swiftly. They encircled many continents. The nanny had gone happily away to the young man. "He likes you, Monsieur. Will you look after him? I'll be back in a minute," she had said to me smiling, so big and fat and young. She wanted to be pressed against some tree and kissed. The sap in the trees was so fresh and full. The boats raced in the wind. There was no sand any more. There were many valleys, green, green, like the fields. A lot of water. Then there were trees. A lot of trees made a forest. A lot of forests made a country. A country with a lot of forests, and many, many trees, is called India.

"Your river—has it a lot of water?" asked Pierrot. He tore a flower-stalk and held it between his teeth. He looked very serious. He looked straight at the pool and the sun inside the pool. Then suddenly he began to cry. He cried and cried silently, tears streaming down his cheeks.

"I want to go to your country," he said. "I want to go to the wedding."

"And the elephant?"

"Oh, yes. I will ride the elephant. Take me in your arms?" I lifted him up. He held me tight against his head. He would not look back. I bought him some candies. He held the packet in his hand. He could not speak. He would not eat. He looked down at Kiki in the water.

"And now, the fifteen days' journey are over," he said.

"Yes," I said.

"Where are the goddesses?"

"Don't you see, there's one to the right and one to the left. And how beautiful they are."

"Yes. And I ride on my elephant. I'll call him Titi the Elephant." He was pleased with his speech. "Titi, now there, turn to the left. And now to the right. There, you're a good boy. And, what's the name of your river, Monsieur the Prince?"

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"The Ganges," I said.

"The Ganges, Titi. You see, you see that's your river. There are two Princesses, one to the right and one to the left. It's not like the oasis. There's only Jeannot. There, there's only Jeannot. And the ships have sailed everywhere. They've gone far, very far, fifteen days far. The Ganges, it's the river. It's all purple. The elephant is all white. I go to the wedding. The ships go to the wedding. There are forests. There's a wedding. The Prince has buttons with faces in them. Oh, yes," he said, smiling.

THE nanny came and said:

"At whom are you smiling, Pierrot?" She was alone now.

"Jeannot, Jeannot," he cried, and jumped on the gravel. Jeanne looked very happy.

"Take me up?" he said. She lifted him and held him in her arms.

"I go to the wedding," he shouted.

"What wedding?"

"Your wedding," he said, and gave her a bite on the cheek.

"*Petit nigaud,*" she said, happy.

"Jeannot," he said. "Do you know where we are?"

"At the Luxembourg."

"*Non, petit nigaud,*" he answered back. "We are far, far away, fifteen days by steamship. There are no sands. There are no camels. There are forests—and then, there are elephants. Then, there's the Ganges." I smiled. "This Monsieur, he's the Prince of India."

"Yes," I said. The wind blew hard and cold. The boats fell against one another.

"We must be going home now. Oh, it's so cold," said Jeanne, as though to the wind. She was looking at the gate of the garden, the one near the Medici-fountain. The young man was gone, and the path had gone with him. The leaves were black against that grey sky.

"Jeannot," said Pierrot, "in that country, there are two Princesses. But me," he whispered, hugging her against his cheeks, "I have only you."

"His father," explained Jeanne, "is a Colonel, and is in Morocco. Pierrot's mother died in childbirth. It's now almost two years since it happened."

"You are my friend," he said to her, begging.

"Oh, yes, I am your sweetheart," she said. In the Luxembourg everybody heard it. The Sorbonnard girl looked up and let fall her book on her lap, and reflected. Time flies in the spring. One should not grow big-bosomed like some Anne of Austria (1629–1687?).

"We're going to the wedding, to the wedding," cried Pierrot, on his way.

"And Kiki?" asked Jeanne.

"Kiki is in the oasis. I know that," he said.

"Ah, *petit nigaud,* and what will grandfather say to me? 'You're a harlot, a liar, a hypocrite.' And you, and your Kiki? What have you done with him, Pierrot?"

Pierrot slid down her waist and stood on the gravel. Then he took my hand, and said: "Prince, take me to your country, take me to the wedding. There are two goddesses, one for the wedding of the night and the other for the wedding of the day. And there's the elephant Titi. I am on Titi this morning. He walks, he walks like this, as one rides up the waves, and then rides down. The boat goes up and goes down the waves. I go to your country."

Jeanne had gone back to search for Kiki. I did not tell her what he'd done with it.

As we went up the steps, he saw the Medici-fountain, he ran towards it and said: "I know where I am. I am in India." He was sure I was a Prince. He was sure Jeanne was nowhere to be seen. He was sure Kiki was dead.

The elephant was drinking water at the Medici-fountain. He saw the two goddesses, one to the right and one to the left. One that I would marry with the moon, and one that I would marry with the sun. He looked at the water and said:

"Look, there, that's your country. How beautiful it is. Now it's the hour of the wedding," he whispered, and he grew thoughtful.

Up above the trees, the sky bore away the rapid, white clouds, and in the waters they ran like boats. One of them had already reached the other shore, was safe in harbour. He took my hand and held it in his, and said: "I love forests. It must be warm there."

"Pierrot," shouted Jeanne. I let go his hand. He cried and cried, and would not leave the

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Medici-fountain. He saw the elephant in the forest. He saw the river Ganges. He saw the two goddesses, with four hands and a crown of white gold on their heads. He rode the elephant, covered in silk and gold, and he came to my marriage.

"Jeannot," he cried and slipped into the water. He touched the bottom that was like himself, his hands and feet made of light. The water was not deep but very cold and full of perfumes. It was mid-April and the winds were blowing. The new leaves were sharp, and the sky was like a deep sleep. In India, the earth is warm with silence, and the Ganges flows.

Two or three days later I came to the Luxembourg. Pierrot was not there. Again and again, I came. Pierrot was not there. Towards the end of the month, he came and with a new nanny—middle-aged. And when he saw me, he ran towards me and said: "Monsieur . . . Monsieur le Prince," and leaped straight into my arms. He was very fond of his new navy-suit. It had golden buttons that shone in one's eyes. "Look," he said. "Look, faces, faces," and he laughed. He seemed to have grown in years. "I know now," he said. "I am a Maharaja. I ride the elephant. The wedding is over."

THE LOST SAILOR

(after Heredia)

A following breeze, Arcturus clear of clouds,
He watched the Pharos fading through the shrouds,
The coast of Egypt vanish from his view,
Proud of his buoyant ship, with bronze made new.

O nevermore the lights of home for her!
On desert dunes where not a blade can grow
And through the tamarisk the sad winds blow,
The storm itself has dug his sepulchre.

Deep in the hollow of the shifting sands
Make still at last his troubled heart and hands,
And in the starless, moonless, dawnless night
Grant to a ship-wrecked mariner his right.

There on that Grecian shore, become his grave,
Give to his wandering ghost, what all ghosts crave;
Cover him lightly earth, and hush him, wave.

Frances Cornford

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COMMENT

THE ZEITGEIST

IN any age there exists a confusion of values, due to temporary economic or social conditions; a psychic disturbance which interferes with the clear perception of what is enduring in human creation. That is to say, a given age always looks at its contemporary art with contemporary prejudices. When, in the course of time, these prejudices disappear, the art of that age is revalued, though again with contemporary prejudices—the prejudices of a new age. We need not deny that certain values persist through all ages, but we must recognise that it is always difficult at any historical moment to distinguish them clearly.

What we have to recognise is the existence, in every age, of a state of intellectual consciousness which is, in fact, an illusion. For reasons which so far remain obscure, certain works of art are elevated temporarily to the highest rank of esteem or popularity, and even the best minds of a period are deceived by them. The duration of the fame of such works varies, but it rarely seems to exceed fifty years, and may be much less.

All the arts exhibit such phenomena, but they can be observed with most clarity in literature (books have a better chance or material survival—it is very difficult to trace the works of a once famous painter, such as Benjamin Robert Haydon). A typical example of a temporarily inflated genius is James Macpherson, whose Ossianic poems aroused world-wide enthusiasm between 1760 and 1800. Homer and Milton were evoked for comparison, and the best minds of the time (Goethe's, for example) were deceived. The popularity of Ossian was associated with a general movement—a newly discovered and widely diffused interest in the culture of primitive peoples, to which we owe literary monuments of permanent value such as Percy's *Reliques*. That movement may be regarded as the expression of an atavism which was a natural reaction to the prevailing rationalism of the 18th century—the Zeitgeist had provoked a revolt in the collective unconscious. But what provokes the Zeitgeist: that particular combination of curiosity and excitement which leads to a blind and unbalanced judgement of more than a few contemporary artists?

It is a very complex problem, and it is doubtful if it can be solved without recourse to some form of group analysis which would lay bare the workings of unconscious collective motives. It is not my intention to provide any such general hypothesis—indeed, I merely wish to pose the problem, with particular reference to contemporary art and literature.

WE might say that in any age there are certain conventions (accepted canons of art) and certain prejudices (ethical or religious) which constitute the taste of that age. We know that in the middle of the 18th century, for example, the prevailing taste was "classical," and according to that taste certain poets and painters were esteemed above all others. But this does not explain the anomalies *within* that situation. Exact statistics are always lacking, but we know, for example, that a poet like Abraham Cowley had a reputation out of all proportion to the merit of his equally classical contemporaries. In his own day he was probably esteemed more than his contemporary

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Milton, and certainly more than another contemporary, Andrew Marvell, whom we now find much more genuinely poetic than Cowley. Cowley was an infant prodigy, and early had a great reputation for his cleverness. Indeed, it seems very difficult for an age to distinguish between cleverness and genius among its contemporaries: the works of genius are probably at first more strange and obscure, and cleverness is always immediately dazzling.

I have just said that we nowadays find Marvell "more genuinely poetic" than Cowley. Sir Herbert Grierson's opinion that, apart from Milton, Marvell "is the most interesting personality between Donne and Dryden, and at his best a finer poet than either," expressed in 1921, would have been inconceivable in 1721 or 1821 (though by the latter date he had been "discovered" by Hazlitt and Lamb). The vagaries of taste in respect of Donne, and even Shakespeare, are well known, and may be due to many factors. But we must ignore this secondary, historical process, to concentrate on the problem of the Zeitgeist, which is always of its time, and immediate.

That it is not merely a question of the prevailing level of taste (in other words, of the Zeitgeist being selective and arbitrary) may be observed by contrasting the fate of two writers who aroused the same universal enthusiasm *at the same time*—Macpherson, already mentioned, and Laurence Sterne. Macpherson's name is not remembered by the general public, but Sterne has stood the test of time: he has never gone out of fashion, and has even been a fruitful influence in our own day (on Joyce, for example). Obviously Sterne did not survive because he gave conscious expression to some eternal values which were distinct from the fashionable values represented by Macpherson. He, too, was a creature of his time, but he has survived because he gave expression to a new development of consciousness (made us aware of hitherto unexpressed nuances of sensibility), and invented a technique appropriate for the purpose.

Macpherson and Sterne may be compared with painters like Bouguerau and Cézanne, but there is this difference: Sterne was immediately recognised, while Cézanne was not adequately recognised until after his death. But this may be explained as a difference in the speed of diffusion in the respective arts of painting and writing.

The case of Sterne leads me to suggest as a tentative hypothesis that the "eternal" works of art—those exempt from the mortality of taste and fashion—are those which are based on individual sensibility, to the exclusion of all conceptual or "ideological" motives. But this still leaves the individual at the mercy of those unconscious forces which we call taste or fashion, unless genius is precisely the capacity to evade those forces, to be "*détaché de son époque*," as Lionello Venturi has suggested.

Whether "eternal values" do or do not exist in the æsthetic realm or the ethical realm, is a philosophical question which I will not discuss now. But in the realm of æsthetic values we know that each age has its own definition of beauty; and if the æsthetic value of "beauty" is denied, then we are ready with a substitute value which we may call "vitality" or "realism." In my own opinion there are a limited number of such values, some of which are essential to the survival of a work of art.

We have admitted that the values of art are subject to variations in esteem, and what is for the moment fashionable may seem eternal. There are no values in art which have not, at one time or another, been challenged. But this general condition of relativity should not blind us to the fact that the world keeps returning to certain specific values. These values may be few, but they seem to be fundamental. I would mention as examples the geometrical proportions which are common to forms of organic life as well as to the forms of art—the so-called Divine Proportion, etc.—and those invariable qualities of harmony and serenity to which mankind returns after every period of storm and stress. If these values are regarded as eternal, then the variations may be ascribed to certain distortions of a temporary nature.

The origin of such distortions must no doubt be sought in the economic sphere, which is the most unstable element in human society. The cultural values of a dominant class do not

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always correspond to its social status. In any period of revolutionary upheaval, a hiatus will exist for at least a generation between society and culture. A rising economic élite brings with it a low level of taste—perhaps has no taste at all. It is not at ease in manners, speech, clothes, or in any form of expression. Hence for a time this new social class, its own taste uncertain or unformed, will attempt to "buy culture." The middleman intervenes. He exploits a favourable situation. Dealers have their "hunches" or intuitions; fashions are more or less deliberately created to feed a new market. In such a situation the Zeitgeist is born—a spirit, an illusion, an *ignis fatuus*.

It follows that the Zeitgeist is not a phenomenon susceptible of rational explanation. At a certain moment there exists a favourable conjunction of events—of wants, desires, objects to satisfy these wants and desires, middlemen to act as catalysts in this portentous situation. The collective unconscious is in need of certain stimuli, of certain releases of tension. A significant pattern exists in the social psyche—a synchronology of otherwise discrete phenomena. The Zeitgeist finds expression in certain expressive forms, in works of art that are suddenly fashionable, and that no power of reason or good taste can prevent from becoming fashionable. The likelihood is that even men of good taste will be deceived.

WHAT is the moral of all this—what lesson of humility should we learn from a sober realisation of the facts of cultural history? Two, I think:

First, that the fashionable is always suspect—the fame of the greater part of the most fashionable artists of any period does not survive that period.

Second, which is the contrary proposition, that the greater part of the best artists of any period have a posthumous fame out of all proportion to their contemporary fame.

Finally, in view of these general considerations, can we venture to characterise the features of our own Zeitgeist? It is a hazardous proceeding, but I will suggest four of them:

1. *Egoism*—the prevailing subjectivism of all forms of art: the general Zeitgeist of Romanticism, now two hundred years old.

2. *Erethism*—by which I mean excessive excitation of the sensibility, the absence of serenity.

3. *Eclecticism*—the tendency to make, both of poetry and painting, a mythological salad. I might instance, without any critical intention, poems like "The Waste Land," paintings like "Guernica," the theatre of Giraudoux and Cocteau.

4. *Escapism*—the tendency to evade the human dilemma; denial of the tragic sense of life.

But it is easier to describe the general characteristics of our Zeitgeist than to decide which particular artists best represent it. In any case, I do not propose to undertake such an invidious task. Of these four features of contemporary art, I would say that it is unlikely that we can now escape from subjectivism without some great change in human consciousness, such as occurred at the beginning of the Romantic Movement—and it would have to be an *extension* of human consciousness, such as the Romantic Movement was, and not a mere return to a narrower outlook. Secondly, we must remember that vitality is essential to any enduring art—it is an excess of excitement we must guard against, not its presence.

It is the third and fourth characteristics of our culture which should give us most concern. Though there is a traditional element in all civilised art, and though Shakespeare and Milton are "eclectic" in no small measure, nevertheless there is a directness and originality about all "eternal" works of art: the myth is used as a paradigm or as an archetype, not as an exotic mine to be exploited. As for escapism, there is no compromise possible on this issue: to escape from life is to escape from art.

Herbert Read

ON LITERARY MOVEMENTS

THERE are a good many signs in literary England today of what might be called a rebellion of the Lower Middle Brows. It is easier to define this movement in negative than

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in positive terms. It is an uprising against the intellectual trends of Oxford, Cambridge, and London, and the influence on literary figures of Paris and Berlin. Yet it is not regional, being equally averse to, say, Dylan Thomas and W. H. Auden, and although opposed to stylish dons, is itself conducted by university teachers. Its exponents often express contempt for intellectual standards which—to their minds—arise from or are associated with "classy" ones. There is an aroma of inferiority complex about its protest.

A good many of its supporters are teachers who, coming from the "red brick" universities, resent being called "dons." In a letter published not long ago in the *New Statesman and Nation*, one of them, Mr. S. W. Dawson, describing himself as a junior member of "a provincial University," adds that in his circles the term "don" merely causes "amused embarrassment." This capacity for being amusingly embarrassed evidently derives from Cambridge—from Dr. F. R. Leavis's anti-university Cambridge where the Leavisites devote some of their critical faculties to being embarrassed much as the Quakers did to quaking. Mr. Dawson also likens his concern with literature to that of "a sanitary engineer about the condition of the drains"—a metaphor as revealing as his capacity for embarrassment. He defends the works of his embarrassed and sanitary colleagues not on the grounds of their quality but because, through them, "the accepted standards of the literary world of the weekend reviews have been challenged."

This gives a good deal to think about. It fuses the negative impulse of D. H. Lawrence —who hated the "literary world"—with the tendency of certain "advanced" critics in America as well as England to regard creation as an off-shoot of critical analysis. No doubt there is a good deal to sympathise with in attacks on our world of literature which, with its snobbishness, is perhaps as responsible for this new provincial puritanism as the Regency Rakes were for the respectable Victorians. Still, this movement embodies a fallacy which older writers have not been scrupulous in refuting: the idea that contemporary writers and the standards of literature are made and unmade by movements. We seem now to have arrived at a situation where it is taken for granted that the hegemony of a movement should be overthrown by a new movement which does not necessarily need to be better than the one it supersedes, since to be a movement is everything.

New life is always necessary to literature and the old régime always needs to be overthrown. But the mere presence of a movement does not necessarily indicate life, and the new might be worse than the old. There is one good reason for doubting whether university teachers will bring new life to literature: they might confuse literature with lecturing about literature.

Lawrence was much more than a provincial don who hated Oxford, Cambridge, and London. He was a man of vision, and—to a fault—he was completely lacking in the routine attitude to his writing. I can best explain what I mean by this "routine attitude" by suggesting that what is wrong with writers today is not the lack of movements but the acceptance of literature as a routine. Look around, and everywhere we see writers using their energies and their techniques to produce just what is expected of them. "What will X—— do next?" was a question which, twenty-five years ago, if asked about any one of a dozen writers, opened up vistas of the imagined unthinkable. Asked today, the answer usually is: "X—— will develop a little further along the lines which he has made clear to us."

Excess of critical self-awareness, alignment with movements, and belonging to political or religious orthodoxies, are responsible for this state of affairs. It is also furthered by cultural agencies which call on writers to produce further examples of the kind of work they are famous for producing. The unexpected is the unencouraged. Criticism is the substitute muse of the universities which is let loose like a watch-dog in the young writer's soul by teachers who equate literature with sanitary engineering.

One would feel more optimistic about the future of writing if one heard, not that there was a movement to shift its centre of gravity

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from Oxford and Cambridge to the common rooms of the provincial universities, but that a good many young people were writing private journals, long letters to their friends, and manuscripts addressed to their wastepaper baskets. This may indeed be happening. The one thing essential to writing—the capacity of the individual writer to cultivate his solitude—cannot be measured, not even by teachers.

THE only literary movements worthy of respect are those made by the young who think themselves the greatest geniuses who ever lived, and who are convinced that everything else being written, and nearly everything else that has been written, is worthless. A movement of this kind may bring a genuine renewal of literature, because it is a drawing together of those who are isolated, and its natural leader is the one who is most isolated of all. James Joyce was a one-man movement who turned the whole of literature after him into a glacier which he moved.

One does not have much respect for movements which are simply asserted because a group of people feel they must have a movement; still less for those who think the important thing is not their own achievements but the displacement of other writers.

Perhaps, in the absence of any genuine, one-man movement, the preservation, if not the salvation of literature, may lie in encouraging, while discriminating among, the present considerable diversity of talents, and being interested in the diversity of life. If the novel may seem to have halted, this may be due not to the lack of provincial teachers entering the field of fiction, but to the fact that the real interest in literature is no longer contained in novels. At such a time, instead of narrowing our ideas and activities, it may be better to widen our conception of what is literature. There may, indeed, be tasks for dons. It may be though that dons are most interesting when they write about subjects which are not purely literary. Literature is starving not from the lack of people being interested in literature but perhaps from the lack among writers of a wider interest in knowledge. And the literary historian of the future may find that the teachers to whom literature owes most in our time are not those who carp at the literary world, but those who inform it of things they know about. Books like Kitto's *The Greeks*, or Glover's *The Ancient World*, in which academics try to make their special knowledge widely acceptable, may be found to have nourished literature more than all the literary criticism coming from the provinces.

In the present situation, there is little to be said for supporting a movement-for-the-sake-of-a-movement: though if ever there is a movement of genius which cultivates solitude, we may pray for the enlightenment which can bless it on its way. Meanwhile the best thing is to stimulate interest in a great many of the things out of which literature is made: these include the past, the present, and the future, philosophy, history, and politics, as well as literature and art.

Stephen Spender

QUOTED WITHOUT COMMENT

Ulysses: O! these ENCOUNTERERS, *so glib of tongue,*
That give a coasting welcome ere it comes,
And wide unclasp the tables of their thoughts
To every tickling reader, set them down
For sluttish spoils of opportunity
And daughters of the game.

(Troilus and Cressida, Act IV, Scene 5)

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Letter from Berlin

EAST GERMANY'S PERMANENT REVOLUTION

KREUZBERG is a poor workingman's district in the northern part of West Berlin. Of the 218,000 people who live there, some 80,000 are the unemployed and their dependents. Whole sections of the area are in ruins, a landscape of dereliction crossed by deserted streets, enlivened only by a few workers on bicycles, a lonely street-walker, or some boys who, with a special municipal permit, search the rubble for hidden treasures. There remain intact rows of drab five-storey tenements, whose dreariness is unrelieved except for the bright-red geraniums on the pitiful balconies.

The street corner where Friedrichstrasse, Zimmerstrasse, and Kochstrasse meet is usually much the same as the rest of Kreuzberg, so I was surprised to come across a band playing there, accompanied by a chorus of singing voices. People were peering down from behind the geraniums, watching and laughing. The street was decorated with lanterns and garlands, and several hundred children milled about, singing a popular West Berlin song, "Go pack your bathing trunks, for we go a-swimming to Wannsee," while they formed a conga-line, putting their hands on the shoulders of those before them, and undulating in a long chain through the street. At a signpost in the middle of the street, the line halted while those in the lead muted their voices; then the line turned sharply back on itself, returning to its starting point, its chant rising again to a crescendo.

The signpost proclaimed that here ended the boundaries of West Berlin. Looking over into East Berlin, one could see only a group of six People's Police in their new grey uniforms, standing with carbines slung over their shoulders, looking at their feet silent and rather embarrassed. Only their very young, chain-smoking officer stared across the border with the hostile vigilance his instructions demanded.

A large proportion of the children, it turned out, were themselves from East Berlin. They had been invited for the afternoon by the children of Kreuzberg and they had come. Later in the day, when the neighbourhood party of two worlds neared its end, every child received as a gift a small bag of sweets; in addition, the East Berlin children received a five-pound package containing margarine, sugar, canned fish, and a few other foodstuffs not available in East Berlin. As they crossed the border, clutching their gifts, the People's Police looked the other way.

"Before June 17th," Mayor Kressmann of Kreuzberg told me, "this would not have been possible. The East Berlin parents would not have dared to let their children cross the border; the children would not have dared to play quite openly at *jeux interdits* under the very eyes of the Communist police; they would not have dared to take home their food parcels; and the People's Police would not have dared to look away when the little transgressors passed by."

He was underlining a fact that has, since the June days, become ever more plain: East Germany has become a country in a state of permanent revolution.

REFUGEES are as much a feature of West Berlin as, say, tourists are of Paris, or pilgrims of Rome. It is true that considerably fewer refugees from East Germany have been arriving in West Berlin since the June days; instead of the more than a thousand that used to come every day, there is now "merely" a daily average of 300 to 400. But they differ very much from their predecessors; the peasants-to-be-expropriated, the frightened shop-keepers, manufacturers, engineers, the students in search of free learning. The great majority of the arrivals, since June, have been workers, mostly between twenty and forty-five years of age, who had to flee because they

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took an active part in the uprising, or because they participated in subsequent new actions of resistance.

From many thousands of individual reports which, as in a mosaic, join to make up the historical picture, it is clear that the rebellion which first became apparent on June 17th is still going on. When the Communist government of East Germany began to follow up its armed suppression of the rioters by the persecution of their leaders, it only provoked a new series of disturbances.

Early in July it relieved its own Minister of Justice, the former Social-Democrat Max Fechner, and put in his place Hilde Benjamin, a Communist of middle-class background and education obsessed by a genuine, Torquemada-like hatred of "the class enemy." After denouncing the "incredibly light sentences" meted out by her predecessor (who had admitted that "some of the participants of June 17th had been workers rather than criminals"), and after announcing that the saboteurs—provocateurs—fascists—Wall Street agents, etc. who had been responsible for the events of June 17th would be persecuted with extreme severity, she instituted a reign of terror. In July and August alone, according to very conservative statistics, 183 convictions—including 17 death sentences—were passed by her courts for participation in the June rising. But the reign of terror backfired. In dozens of factories there were slow-downs, as in the Agfa and Zeiss-Jena plants, or sit-down strikes, sometimes lasting a week or more, as in the huge Buna plant in Bitterfeld. And the Communists gave way. In at least 39 attested cases, workers arrested by the State Security Service have been freed.

The great lesson of June 17th to most East Germans was that they were not merely lonely, isolated, terrorised individuals but also members of an invisible but real free community. As a result, though they continued to be persecuted, their spirits were less oppressed. Take, for instance, the girl who had been jailed in East Germany at the beginning of this year for an innocuous, if nasty, remark about Communists—in whom she was really far less interested than in her future as a dancer. On June 17th, strikers stormed her prison and freed her. On June 18th, her parents and neighbours urged her to flee to West Berlin, so as not to be sent back to prison. Naïvely, she went to the highway and thumbed a ride on the first westward-bound truck, telling her story to the driver. He took her to his destination, a village where she asked the first woman she met in the street for a night's shelter, telling once more the reason for her flight. The woman put her up, and neighbours brought her food and money for the next day when she again proceeded westward by the same means. For a week these encounters and responses recurred. Once, the manager and employees of a state-run shop in a small town made a collection for her after they heard her story. In the end, somebody smuggled her across the border to West Berlin. Only a few months before, people would have been too afraid to help her, and somebody would probably have denounced or arrested her. Experiences like hers, which would have been most extraordinary before June, have become almost commonplace in East Germany today.

AMONG the refugees arriving in West Berlin since June there has been a record percentage of "People's Police"; in one month, from July 27th to August 27th, there were 513 who asked for asylum. The sharp increase in the ratio of the potential hunters over the potential hunted among the refugees indicates how badly damaged, if not shattered, the authority and self-confidence of the ruling machine has become. The East German Communist press, and confidential records of party meetings which found their way to West Berlin, reveal the extent of the disaster. According to an official (secret) report of the Communist-controlled General Federation of Labour, from 35 to 45 per cent of the rank and file ceased to pay their membership fees after June 17th, many "lost" their membership books without applying for new ones, and a great many left the organisation in open protest. In the FDJ, the Communist-controlled youth organisation, a similar mass exodus took place. Fifty per cent of the jobs on the middle and lower levels of the Ministry of Domestic Affairs were not filled by the end of August because their holders had been either sacked or had resigned.

In the courtyard of a West Berlin distribution centre, I was talking to some East Germans waiting patiently eight to ten hours in a queue for food parcels, when the press photographer of a West Berlin newspaper arrived to take pic-

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tures. A number of West Berlin officials and policemen rushed toward him, insisting that he not take any photographs which, when published, might serve to identify the food recipients to the East German police. He was about to pack away his camera when the East Germans in the waiting line urged him to take their pictures after all. "We don't care whether they recognise us or not. We want our rulers to see that the whole people is here in order not to starve," one said. And a young girl added, amidst murmurs of approval: "Let's send our pictures to Ulbricht, so he knows what we want, and where we get it, and what we think of him."

Other instances are not hard to find. In the factory of Schwarzcolm the workers forced their directorate to let them use company trucks to drive to West Berlin to pick up their food packages. The crews of the great Haennigsdorf plants voted to march in closed ranks to West Berlin, six hours away, to pick up their packages. In an instrument-producing plant near Berlin, a conference of trade union officials was instructed to vote that every recipient of a food package would be immediately fired; but of the 51 union officers, only 4 consented. In the first three weeks of distribution, slightly more than 10 per cent of the total population of East Germany journeyed to West Berlin in order to obtain a food parcel.

Perhaps the East Germans are a bit too intoxicated with success, and underestimate the trials that lie before them. Still, this kind of political sanguineness is easy to forgive. From it, there grows courage, and from courage—who knows?

Norbert Muhlen

SAILING FROM TILBURY

As on midwinter's day I'm departing, and
Direct my thoughts already over the sea miles
While at Tilbury at anchor, to England,
Where in longest night concealed, immense she lies,

Loose about us, on either bank of Thames,
Where we await further cargo and a final tide
We feel, for in gloom we cannot see, her arms
Around us as indifferent as a bride

Asleep. Sleep, magnificent birthplace. Sleep and dream.
We shall awake at sea with gulls flying over
Our wake annihilated in a fog. I am
Saying goodbye to my love in the night I leave her.

David Wright

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Letter from New Delhi

JOBS, KASHMIR, AND KOREA

AUGUST and September are hot and sticky months but this year unexpectedly heavy rain, which has made the countryside around green with the promise of rich crops, has brought the occasional day's and, more important, night's relief. Both Houses of Parliament have been in session for some time and perhaps the weather has had something to do with the dullness of the debates. On the other hand, of course, it is true that the introduction of estate—that is, death—duties for the first time is not likely to produce sparkling speeches even at the winter solstice. Clause by clause discussion of this bill has occupied MPs now for many days and, however worthy the measure may be, it makes for dull listening and even duller reading in the next day's newspapers.

Question hour in both Houses is somewhat livelier, with the Communist members in particular pertinaciously exposing any and every "scandal" which might reflect discredit on the Anglo-American bloc. One recent excitement has been the price of oil in Assam. Because some oil is produced there—though it is only a small fraction of India's requirements—it seems as if it ought to be cheaper for the Assamese than for people elsewhere in India. World oil economics are, alas, not worked out that way, to the perhaps exaggerated surprise of both the opposition and some members of the Government. The Government was firm, however, in indicating that it had no intention of going the Mossadeq way.

The fact that counterfeiting has become a major cottage industry in Travancore Cochin was revealed by the Home Minister in the House of the People. In the Council of States, one of the liveliest debates has been on a resolution advocating sterilisation of the adult insane: a Communist member was concerned chiefly about the dividing line between genius and insanity; he was afraid that in some cases it might not be clearly enough defined; and he was in good company this time because Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, the Health Minister, approved his stand vigorously on "ethical, health, and practical grounds." The resolution was safely laid to rest.

Nevertheless, despite the dog-days in Parliament, the last three months in Delhi have been, both politically and economically, some of the most active we have had since Independence came. Dismal science though it may be, economics has leapt into first place in the public interest. At the end of June, the newspapers were beginning to report speeches about the sudden growth of unemployment. In July, at the annual session of the All-India Congress Committee at Agra—the city of the Taj Mahal—the most forceful resolution was one dealing with employment opportunities in India's Five Year Plan. In August, as soon as the House of the People met, it was clear that Members of Parliament from all parties were not satisfied with the inaction which not infrequently follows upon Congress Party resolutions. The Congress Parliamentary Party in three private meetings expressed dissatisfaction, and now the Government of India has suddenly declared the Plan out-of-date, the Finance Minister himself tabling an amendment calling for its revision.

As a matter of fact, nobody yet knows what the volume of unemployment is, or even whether employment opportunities as a whole have grown in the last year or have stood still. But the applicants for jobs in the city of Delhi have never been so persistent. Most of the learned analysts put the blame on the cost of living, which has risen from 10 to 15 per cent in most Indian cities since March, 1952. The sudden emergence of widespread unrest, they say, is the result primarily of increasing irritation in lower middle-class homes where the unemployed present an intolerable additional burden. It is certainly true that in Calcutta, where there were quite unusual disturbances because of a rise of a quarter of an anna in

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second-class street-car fares, most of the trouble came from the lower middle-classes, employed and unemployed.

MR. A. K. GOPALAN, the Leader of the Communist group of 27 in the House of the People (which has 489 members), has been making hay while the sun shines. Fortune has been kind to him, even apart from furnishing him with a new and unexpected source of public unrest. He won the ballot for the only private member's resolution to be debated in the current session of the House of the People. The winning resolution was one on nothing less than unemployment, a subject which might well have been handpicked for his special purpose. But his speech was ineffective, producing little impression, with its complicated figures, on the House, and less outside. However, the debate certainly showed the warmth of feeling on the subject, and its anti-climax came when the Finance Minister, instead of justifying the Plan, formally proposed an amendment, as already reported, calling for its immediate revision.

This was not so much a Communist victory as an illustration of the compulsion of events. The urban cost of living in India today is between three-and-a-half to four times what it was before the war. While workers in some areas like Bombay and Ahmedabad get nearly full compensation for rises in the cost of living, there is little relief for India's sorely tried lower middle-classes. In exceptional cases their incomes may have doubled since 1939, but, by and large, their average standard of living may be said to have been halved. It is regarded from Delhi as a class with exemplary patience, except possibly in Calcutta, but there is no one, after the feeling that has been so strongly expressed in Parliament, who now wishes to put its endurance to the test. With the devaluation of the rupee in 1949, and the removal of the food subsidies in April, 1952, the middle-classes suffered a severe knock. Everyone is agreed they now need a break, and the Finance Minister is, at long last, anxious to oblige. The Congress has been losing by-elections rapidly enough to alter his financial practice, even though this seems to have had the warm approval of experts of the International Monetary Fund.

One thing is noticeable. The interest in international affairs has abated considerably. The opinion that the Prime Minister should lay down his international preoccupations and devote more time to domestic problems has been voiced more than once. It is not yet, however, a widespread popular demand, but it may become such if the revision of the plan—if not the plan itself—does not proceed according to plan!

One of the more tiresome bills before the House of the People this session has been one setting up a new state—the Andhra State—for the Telugu-speaking areas of Madras. This has been the first large concession to the principle of linguistic states, that is, units formed on the basis of a common language, which is presumed to ensure a common culture. Some considerable rivalry has been engendered, and other areas such as Karnataka and Maharastra—speaking Kanarese and Marathi respectively—are now framing parallel demands. It has now been decided to keep them at bay by promise of a Boundary Commission which will look at the whole problem after a year, when it is hoped there will be more calm of mind and most passion spent. There are, in fact, many more important things to be settled first, India's relations with Pakistan being, perhaps, the most important of these.

JUST when Indo-Pakistan relations looked like settling down to a steady improvement, the dismissal of Sheikh Abdullah, the Prime Minister of Kashmir, by the Head of the State, Yuvraj Karan Singh, set off a new train of charges and counter-charges which have not yet abated. Looked at from New Delhi, where chapter and verse are available, these charges appear odd, to put it mildly. It is quite true that India actively discouraged the idea of an independent Kashmir, and as far back as May—May 8 is now stated to be the critical date—this was made clear to Sheikh Abdullah. But the crisis, when it came, was a matter of domestic politics purely. There have long been differences in the Kashmir National Conference, the dominating local party, in which the popular leader was Sheikh Abdullah and the party boss, Bakshi Ghulam Mohammed. There are inevitably differences between popular leaders and party bosses; their attitudes spring from different sources of power. And it now appears that, beneath the surface, the differences between the Kashmir Prime Minister, who was lionised by his people to

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the point of being quite literally the "Sher-e-Kashmir" or the Lion of Kashmir, and his deputy, who could control the party machine, have been growing since 1951. Integration with India was only distantly the cause of these differences. When the crisis finally came, it was on the issue of the resignation of a member of the Bakshi group on a matter unconnected with India. And even today not all those in the Bakshi camp are enthusiastic about integration with India.

Nevertheless the Kashmir incident is central to Indo-Pakistan relations. Pakistan cancelled her Independence Day celebrations except, expressively enough, for the military parade; and there was picketing at the Indian High Commissioner's residence in Karachi by Begum Rahim and twenty other demonstrators who frightened away half his guests. There were heard in Karachi, and are still heard, some ominous cries for a *jehad*, or holy war of liberation. It is a cry against which Indian opinion always hardens.

Indo-Pakistan relations were not, however, all that was involved. While some foreign opinion was ready to jump to the conclusion that this was a new Indian imperialist excursion, there were not a few in Delhi who considered that foreign imperial agents in Srinagar had been up to dirty work. Both allegations have now been shown to be absolutely unfounded. Apart from the strange case of Miss Bellfontaine, an artist and British subject who has been in Kashmir for many years, almost no personal instances of suspicion remain unexpunged. Miss Bellfontaine, who was "externed" by the Kashmir Government, has fiercely protested her innocence, and it is believed that the United Kingdom High Commissioner in New Delhi is arguing her case. For the rest, it has now turned out that Mr. George V. Allen, the American Ambassador, who was supposed to be going to and fro, has never visited Kashmir. And Mr. Adlai Stevenson quickly issued a denial of the report that his conversations last May with Sheikh Abdullah ever encouraged the idea of an independent Kashmir.

The vital point which has emerged from all the turmoil is that there is to be a plebiscite for the entire State of Jammu and Kashmir, and a plebiscite administrator is to be appointed before April, 1954. This is significant progress. For one thing, it confirms the terms of the resolution of August 13th, 1948, of the United Nations Commission for Jammu and Kashmir. Secondly, it goes beyond that resolution in that it contains a deadline for the induction of the plebiscite administrator. It is true there is a new difference of opinion on the choice of administrator. But there are still six months in which this difference might be resolved. All things considered, events in Kashmir in the last two months cannot be described as unfavourable to a settlement.

INDIA has taken very seriously her task of looking after Korean POWs at present unwilling to return to their home country. She sees it as a direct responsibility arising from her policy of non-alignment with the two blocs, as the natural sequel to her success in the armistice negotiations, and as a worldwide recognition of her status as an honest broker.

Typical of the way in which India regards this job is her approach to the question of cost. "Who is going to pay for shipping 5,000 troops to Korea and maintaining them there?" an External Affairs spokesman was asked. He confessed that as yet the Government had not given the matter a thought. The job had to be done at once, and they would do it; and work out the cost of it all later. Actually Great Britain, reportedly on direct instructions from Sir Winston Churchill, provided two of the ships needed for transporting the troops, at an expense of at least £120,000 and not a little inconvenience. And now India is hoping that some financial assistance will be forthcoming from the United Nations.

The night before the last party left Delhi for Korea, Mr. R. K. Nehru, an Indian Civil Servant who is a cousin of the Prime Minister, and who had flown to Korea to survey the situation, gave a reception. As usual on such occasions in the Indian capital, there were diplomats from both sides of both Curtains—Iron and Bamboo—rubbing shoulders, involuntarily at least, on the crowded lawn. It was a cheerful occasion, although a late monsoon rain had swamped the garden shortly before the guests arrived. As it was not an official Indian Government party, alcoholic drinks were served and much appreciated. It was a good send-off to a unique mission which, if it is successfully and smoothly accomplished, cannot fail to add to India's international prestige.

Eric da Costa

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BOOKS

TECHNICS AND TOTALITARIANISM

It is a pleasure, and in these days a rare pleasure, to read a book with which one is in almost complete agreement. In Mr. Leonard Woolf's* estimates of what is good and bad, what is important and what is unimportant, I have found only one thing to query, and that is his very high estimate of the ancient Greeks in the political and ethical spheres. Intellectually and artistically, I could acquiesce in almost any degree of praise; but in practical affairs they made much the same mistakes as are being made at the present day. Mr. Woolf, for example, praises Aristophanes for being irreverent about the gods, and fails to mention that Aristophanes incited the Athenian populace to hostility towards Socrates on the ground that Socrates rejected popular beliefs which Aristophanes himself regarded as absurd. But antiquity plays only a subsidiary part in Mr. Woolf's book, and his views about the Greeks, right or wrong, do not affect his main argument.

The title of the book, *Principia Politica*, is somewhat misleading. The book is not a general treatise on the theory of politics in the style of Aristotle or Hobbes. It is, one gathers, one of a number of volumes, some published, others not yet written, which, in their entirety, will be worthy of the title. But this volume is concerned almost entirely with a narrower question, namely: Can a technically advanced society be stable under a totalitarian dictatorship? This question is of the most urgent present-day importance, and Mr. Woolf's discussion of it is at once broad and penetrating.

His first chapter, which deals with the last hundred years, points out how very much more intimately government affects the lives of ordinary men and women now than it did at any earlier time. This is an inevitable result of more elaborate technique and greater density of population. Up to a point it is independent of the form of government. Australia is as democratic as a country can be, but there are in Australia populous industrial centres which have to have every drop of their water supply carried through pipes for four hundred miles. This is not the sort of necessity with which the "rugged individualism" of a hundred years ago can cope. Or take such a simple matter as the rule of the roads. When I was young, everybody in the country, apparently from sheer lawlessness, kept to the right and, when two vehicles met, each had to pull over quickly to the left. This was possible if you only met one vehicle every half-hour, but it is not possible if you meet one every half-minute.

A great increase in the intensity of government has become inevitable. But it is not necessary that this increase should go as far as it does under Fascist or Communist dictatorships. Mr. Woolf contends—and I have often had the same belief—that a dictatorship so much interferes with initiative and free inquiry as to make even technical progress precarious. He thinks, on this ground, that a totalitarian country cannot long remain in the van of technical progress. He says:

"Unfortunately for authoritarianism, it is practically impossible to isolate or sterilise intelligence and knowledge. Men who are clever enough to destroy a whole city or to make motor cars and aeroplanes and wireless sets or to organise a large factory or to make a Five Year Plan will sooner or later begin to think about other things than atom bombs, the parts of machines, the output of a factory, or figures on a sheet of paper. Among those other things, which they will begin to think about are politics, and politically nothing, as I have several times had to insist, is more dangerous than thought."

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* *Principia Politica: A Study of Communal Psychology*. By LEONARD WOOLF. The Hogarth Press. 25s.

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I hope this is true. It is a view which I have myself held at times, but I have begun to doubt whether it is not perhaps an old-fashioned optimistic delusion. My doubts have been tragically reinforced by the surprising speed with which the Russians have mastered the manufacture of atom bombs and hydrogen bombs. There are also reasons nearer home for thinking that it is easier to canalise intelligence than Mr. Woolf supposes. I have met presidents of technical universities in America who were, so far as I could judge, thoroughly efficient within their own sphere, but remained, in every other sphere, dogmatic barbarians. We have all known, in the so-called "free" societies of the West, men of scientific eminence who accepted the Communist or the Catholic orthodoxy. When the Japanese, in the Meiji era, adopted Western techniques, they did not cease to think of the Mikado as divine. This belief was only destroyed by the atom bomb. In a world so dominated by fear as ours is, the impulse to take refuge in superstition becomes very strong, and, until the atmosphere of fear has been dispelled, I do not see how the liberal way of thinking to which Mr. Woolf and I were accustomed in our youth is to be preserved. Mr. Woolf describes the outlook which was common to himself and his friends when they were undergraduates.

"We had a great deal of that mental curiosity which the Greeks regarded rightly as the first stage on the road to knowledge and even wisdom. There was no subject in heaven or upon earth which we were not eager to discuss with the indefatigable seriousness and thoroughness of youth in pursuit of truth. One result of our pursuit of truth was that none of us any longer believed in God. It was therefore impossible for us to believe, even unconsciously, that the Treasury, Inland Revenue, or Ceylon Civil Service had been established by divine dispensation for the purpose of providing us with an income of £300 rising by increments to £1,000 or £1,200."

This is a very different way of feeling and thinking from that which one is apt to find among the young at the present day, especially on the European continent. There are, I should say, two prevalent philosophies. There is one, which is common among the most intelligent, which is completely cynical. It grasps the fact that a large proportion of the young will probably soon be killed, and it is quite unable to believe that any idealistic purpose will be served by the slaughter. It thus acquires the mentality of Barras during the reign of terror who, when asked what he had done during that time, replied, "I survived." Those among the young to whom this cynical outlook is too bleak and unsatisfying tend to take refuge, not like Mr. Woolf in his youth in free inquiry, but in some one or other of the nostrums advanced by governments as a reason for acquiescing in suicide. Neither the cynical nor the superstitious group would, if it achieved power, restore the mentality of secure freedom which existed before 1914. But these are only conjectures, and, I hope, too pessimistic.

Mr. Woolf is of the opinion that the Communist régime, like that of Hitler, will be brought to an end by defeat in war. He thinks that the stresses and strains involved in the attempt to preserve isolation must in the end produce an explosion which, he thinks, is much more likely to be international than national, on the ground that successful internal rebellion against a police state is scarcely possible. At the very end of his book he says:

"It is extremely improbable that the world can live very long in a state of latent war, and that makes it all the more likely that a dictatorship in the future, as so often in the past, will fulfill itself in what we now know as a world war. This is the way that dictatorships and the world end, with a whimper but also with a bang."

I do not know to what extent Mr. Woolf regards this conclusion as a cheerful one, but it suggests to me several rather gloomy thoughts. There is, in the first place, the doubt whether the war would end in a victory for either party. It might, like its tiny embryo in Korea, end in a stalemate, leading on both sides to a feverish preparation for the next bout. It might lead to a victory of what is humorously called a "free" world with a complete loss, during the war, of whatever vestiges of former freedom had survived; or—and this is perhaps the most probable hypothesis—it might end in a dissolution of ordered government everywhere with a catastrophic diminution of population and a return to primitive anarchy. The one issue that seems to me utterly improbable is a revival of solid Victorian optimism.

No. If there is to be another world war, the hopes for what may be called "liberal" values are vain. The only hope—so, at least, it seems

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to me—is that, somehow, another great war may be avoided, and that gradually the virulence of Communism may grow less.

One of the things that have given me pleasure in reading Mr. Woolf's book is his intellectual robustness. This is a quality that was fairly common when he and I were young, but the general pall of terror has caused it to decay. Most people nowadays seem to think that one brand of pernicious nonsense can only be combatted by another equally pernicious. If you find a man who thinks that two and two are five, you do not attempt to persuade him that two and two are four, because that would be an appeal to cold reason which is never strong enough to combat passion. You attempt instead to persuade him that two and two are six; and you are quite likely to succeed by means of schools and congressional committees, or labour camps and brain-washing, according to your longitude. Mr. Woolf will have none of this. For him, nonsense is nonsense, even if it is rejected among Communists. He is not satisfied, for example, by the project of replacing the empire of Communism by the empire of Catholicism:

"The church can and does, from time to time make pronouncements on religion, morals, metaphysics, politics, or science, the truth of which cannot—for the Catholic—be questioned. The result is that Catholic doctrine has incorporated nearly all the major fantasies and delusions which have had a wide appeal to the irrational in human beings during the last 2,000 years."

It is refreshing to have this sort of thing said straightforwardly by a man who is not deterred by the thought of losing Italian elections or alienating Franco. I wonder how many such men are left.

Bertrand Russell

MANY THINGS *v.* ONE BIG THING

MR. BERLIN'S new essay* takes its title from a dark saying of the Greek poet Archilochus: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing." The essay itself, an enlargement of the piece which caused so much admiring comment when it appeared in 1951 in the *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, discourses on foxes and hedgehogs in terms of Tolstoy and, in particular, of Tolstoy's philosophy of history as expressed in *War and Peace*. But along the way, Mr. Berlin, with his sparkling mind and his subtle, precise, and exquisitely coordinated (sometimes overcoordinated) style, illumines a number of problems of some consequence, not just for Tolstoy, nor just for the 19th century, but for intellectual history and, indeed, for the human dialogue in general.

It is useful perhaps to begin by elucidating the matter of the hedgehog and the fox. This is an opposition, Mr. Berlin contends, which runs through history—the opposition between the hedgehog, massive, obstinate, dedicated, determined to reduce the immense variety of human experience to a single all-embracing system or a single all-explanatory principle, and the fox, quick, curious, sceptical, revelling in the inexhaustible diversity and pluralism of life and faith. Thus, says Mr. Berlin, Plato, Dante, Hegel, Proust were hedgehogs; Aristotle, Shakespeare, Goethe, Joyce were foxes. Or in this century (here surely is a new parlour game), Lenin, Hitler, and Mr. T. S. Eliot would seem to qualify as hedgehogs, William James, Lord Russell, and Franklin D. Roosevelt as foxes; Harpo Marx perhaps as hedgehog, Groucho as fox.

Mr. Berlin would not insist on this too far; there are too many mixed cases (where does Sir Winston Churchill belong? or Mr. W. H. Auden?); but he finds it a fruitful distinction with which to begin an enquiry into Tolstoy. For, to anticipate Mr. Berlin's conclusion, Tolstoy seems to him by nature a fox, brilliantly equipped to explore and reproduce the infinite and intractable multiplicity of experience; but by faith a hedgehog, irrevocably and hopelessly committed to the search for absolutes. In the consequent tension, Mr. Berlin suggests, lies the key to his philosophy of history.

* *The Hedgehog and the Fox.* ISAIAH BERLIN. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. 8s. 6d.

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WHAT was Tolstoy's view of history? He wanted to understand, fully and truly, why things happened; and this passion for truth led him, first of all, into a fierce scepticism about written history. The official communiqué, like the historical monograph, always made the past seem simple and orderly, with events neatly explained, trends identified and motives catalogued, all worked out according to standard categories which the public, through weariness and habit, had come to accept as meaningful. But what meaning did these categories really have? This was Tolstoy's hostile question; and *War and Peace* contained his equally hostile answer. A leading theme of the book was his repeated contrast between what actually happened, with all its sweat, turbulence, confusion, and despair, and the *ex post facto*, public interpretation with which the officials and the professionals would soon bowdlerize and falsify the streaming, untamed reality.

The writing of history thus became a way of concealing rather than of disclosing the truth—concealing it the better to preserve the illusion that individual actions and decisions make a difference. General Marshall used to talk about the "chronic obscurity" of war, by which he meant the fact that all important battle decisions have to be taken on the basis of inadequate or non-existent information. It was this sense of "chronic obscurity," in war or elsewhere, which historians complacently banished; it was this sense which officials who fancied themselves as specialists in managing human affairs —statesmen, strategists, or whatever—complacently ignored; and it was their collective complacency—and the illusion of human power that it sustained—which drove Tolstoy to his exasperated fury.

Against this illusion, Tolstoy spread out his own vision of human insignificance and impotence—the armies sweeping back and forth across Europe like dry leaves before the wind; the great man as the judas-goat who thinks he leads the flock, but leads it only to predestined slaughter. So powerful and so exasperated was this vision that it has seemed to some readers to declare a total determinism so far as human behaviour is concerned, a total nihilism about the writing of history. Yet it never blunted Tolstoy's own passionate and microscopic apprehension of the specific and differentiating properties in human experience; it represented rather his violent contempt for the superficial and frivolous attempts to read unity into multiplicity. There remained always the conviction that unity was there and the hope that in time some historical calculus would be exact and penetrating enough to detect it. It was in the service of that hope that he ruthlessly destroyed the false claimants he met along the way. This creative tension—this perpetual pulling and hauling between the inner hedgehog and the inner fox—supplied the strange power which permeated and unified this greatest of novels.

MR. BERLIN points out that, while writing *War and Peace*, Tolstoy was reading Joseph de Maistre and speculates as to the effect that the great Catholic reactionary might have had on the Russian novelist. There is no question that Tolstoy's picture of the Court of St. Petersburg drew on Maistre's *Soirées*, or that Tolstoy shared Maistre's view of the chronic obscurity of battle, his sardonic amusement at man's belief that he can control events, his scepticism about perfectibility in human nature or progress in society. Together they were reacting against the optimistic rationalism of the 19th century, with its illusions and pretences, its facile hopes for the reform of man and the reorganisation of the world. But where Maistre looked on humanity, when not redeemed by the Church, with permanent distaste and bitterness, Tolstoy, Mr. Berlin argues, did achieve a kind of resolution within history. (Mr. Berlin, indeed, in the zest for parallelisms which overtakes the student of literary or intellectual influences, may minimize the really vast difference between Maistre and Tolstoy—at least from Maistre's viewpoint—on this question; a "sense of reality" founded on divine grace is quite a different thing from a "sense of reality" founded on human grace.) Tolstoy's resolution relied on the unaided resources of man—on human submission to the permanent texture of human life, or human understanding of the limitations and the possibilities of the human predicament. Wisdom became the ability to allow for the "unalterable medium in which we act"; we seek, not freedom, but autonomy. "This sense of the circumambient stream, defiance of whose nature through stupidity or overweening egotism will make our acts and thoughts self-defeating," Mr. Berlin writes (in

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one of his less happy sentences), "is the vision of the unity of experience, the sense of history, the true knowledge of reality" which is common to Tolstoy and Maistre.

But both were better on the offence than on the defence; they were better in destroying the positive visions of others than in projecting their own; that was because, however much they wanted to be hedgehogs, they remained, alas, only foxes. Committed to a belief in single, serene solutions, but incapable of discovering them, they devoted their energies to exposing the fashionable but false "solutions" of their contemporaries. And this was Tolstoy's particular tragedy; his sense of reality was—until his old age—too devastating to be compatible with any moral ideal he could construct "out of the fragments into which his intellect shivered the world." As Mr. Berlin puts it nobly in his concluding sentence:

> At once insanely proud and filled with self-hatred, omniscient and doubting everything, cold and violently passionate, contemptuous and self-abasing, tormented and detached, surrounded by an adoring family, by devoted followers, by the admiration of the entire civilised world, and yet almost wholly isolated, he is the most tragic of the great writers, a desperate old man, beyond human aid, wandering self-blinded at Colonus.

THIS quotation will give some sense of the power and penetration with which Mr. Berlin writes: all readers of Tolstoy will find his book rewarding. But of even wider concern is his picture of the fury with which Maistre and Tolstoy recoiled from the rationalism and humanitarianism of their time. In so doing, they anticipated, one by a century and a half, one by a century, the manic-depressive dialectic of our own day. For us, fury is less the usual response to the insolubility of the world's riddles than is apathy or quiet desperation. Yet the need for putting ourselves in some kind of stable relationship with reality is no less urgent, and the possibility of resolution no less relevant. For the autonomy which Maistre believed would grow under the judgement and mercy of God and which Tolstoy located in the felt, concrete, complex, human sense of the balance between grandeur and weakness—this practical sense of reality remains the hope for us today—for us as individuals in any case; and it seems possible that we will not save the world until we first save ourselves.

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Where does this leave hedgehogs and foxes? Both are capable of autonomy; just as both are capable of running berserk, the great hedgehogs rooting up the seed, the little foxes spoiling the vine. The pathos is that history does not tell us whether it is better to know many things or one big thing; or, rather, it only tells us in a muddled way: for some, one is better; for others, the other. Mr. Berlin does not tell us either. He lavishes his skill and compassion on an illumination of the people and of the problem, not of his own views on the matter at issue. In so doing, he may be properly assessing the limits of history, if not the limits of human wisdom; he is not, as he might say, defying the nature of the circumambient stream. He is also perhaps acting like a fox who is content to remain a fox. Yet Mr. Berlin began, after all, as a philosopher; where are his own positive visions? Is there not, one would like to think, the trace of a hedgehog still within him? Still, it may not be appropriate for another contented fox to ask him this question—unless one is to assume that all foxes cherish the secret desire to be hedgehogs. In this case, the predicament of Tolstoy is even of wider application than one might first have imagined.

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.

THE LONGER VIEW

By taking a long view as a historian and an even longer—or timeless—view as a Christian, Professor Herbert Butterfield* is able to achieve a remarkable, one might almost say unnatural, detachment in examining our difficulties with Communism. His conclusions are startling chiefly in the degree of restraint and literal self-denial which they would impose on the West. As a historian, Professor Butterfield cannot find the present so different from the past as current ideologies require. Especially in what he considers the self-contained art of diplomacy, the same rules are likely to hold in the future as in the past. The continuance of civilisation depends, he thinks, on applying these rules prudently and with a cold, hard look at our own presumptions. Nations cannot profit from historical experience so long as their intellectual leaders insist on regarding each new crisis as unique and final, or believing that the order of things to which they are attached is necessarily best for the world as a whole. Aroused public opinion and aggressive self-righteousness are harmful embarrassments to those who would conduct war wisely and terminate it with the least long-term harm to all concerned.

If the history of the last two centuries and particularly of the last forty years proves anything, according to Professor Butterfield, it is the folly of thinking that each new war can be made the war to end war, and that each new enemy embodies a special form of wickedness whose total destruction will at last bring peace and freedom. In the 1914 war, he says, Allied propaganda used up on the Kaiser and Germany "all the resources of hyperbole" that should have been reserved for Stalin and Hitler. And he further suggests that if Germany had not been treated as if those hyperboles were true, Hitler and Stalin might never have emerged.

Nothing is more evident in European history than the rapidity with which alliances change. These alliances—the alliance with Tsarist Russia for instance—often make moralistic war slogans look questionable indeed. Our present relations with Japan and Germany as against Russia are a recent but hardly final example of such sudden switches. "Since the enemy of today almost invariably has to be your ally against a new aggressor who is liable to turn up tomorrow," it is prudent to treat him with future community rather than past wrongs in mind. Unless whole peoples are to be exterminated, we have to go on living with them in the same crowded world. When this necessity is properly understood, we are likely to treat other nations with more moderation and equality.

An even more profoundly equalizing influence is Christianity, so long as it does not let itself be used as an instrumentality in struggles for power. Professor Butterfield argued a few years ago in *Christianity and History*—and

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* *Christianity, Diplomacy and War.* By HERBERT BUTTERFIELD. The Epworth Press. 8s. 6d.

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refers to the belief here—that all nations and political systems are equally under the judgement of God, a judgement which man takes over at his peril. If man arrogates to himself the right to judge actual wickedness and punish sin, there will be "no end to atrocities." Every nation at one time or another has been equally ruthless in exploiting weaker peoples. The French revolutionists and the German liberals of 1848 were as full of dreams of annexation as the kings who came before and the Communists who came after. Religious wars are likely to be the cruellest and most destructive of all. In recent times their place has been taken by wars for unlimited purpose, wars for total surrender, wars for Utopia. The atomic bomb was first used in warfare against Japanese cities "for the purpose of turning a negotiated peace into the luxury of "total surrender."

MEN are equal in their potentialities for sin, and dæmonic forces can work equally through all kinds of organisations, including churchly ones. Evil breaks out most readily in times of temptation, disorder, and unchecked power. Professor Butterfield is a Burkean conservative in believing that men are kept human and civilised only through an elaborate pluralistic system of safeguards which develop slowly within any society through custom, tradition, and institutional experience. He is anti-absolutist. He shares Lord Acton's sense of the corrupting effect of power and of its tendency to expand until it meets a force equal or superior to itself. The purpose of statesmanship is to maintain a balance, minimise war and disorder, and check expanding powers through alliances.

Given an unreasonable ascendancy, one state will behave about as badly as another. The worst are usually young nations and new forms of government. It is for their good, as well as for the good of the world as a whole, that they should not be allowed to develop too rapidly. They should be held in check, "contained," until they become civilised. This must be done through counter-force, but with peaceful coexistence as the goal. Professor Butterfield's argument is strikingly parallel to that of Mr. George Kennan in *American Diplomacy, 1900–1950*, though Mr. Kennan hardly mentioned Christianity. Professor Butterfield is not, of course, a pacifist, and he feels that English

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pacifism between the wars made responsible diplomacy less possible. War is justified, however, only in defence of stability and continuity. A war for righteousness, by extending disorder, destroying continuities, and legitimising hatreds, simply increases the amount of released evil in the world and breeds future wars and revolutions.

Professor Butterfield is a conservative and defender of the *status quo*, but in a very special way. His position permits none of the polemic self-assurance and condescension that distinguishes much "new conservative" writing. He knows how little capable men are of judging their own cases or appreciating those of their adversaries, especially when they can convince themselves that moral principles and material self-interest coincide. *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* offers only a "world of half-lights, this grey, drab world of the half-righteous," where "Christianity, even if it cannot persuade men to rise to the contemplation of spiritual things, embodies principles which may at least have the effect of bringing the dreamers down to earth." The real enemy is the tendency to myth and eschatology. Professor Butterfield would like to have diplomacy divorced as much as possible from ideology. He not only goes back to Burke in his analysis of the revolution which has been spreading since 1789, but takes his model of diplomacy from the 18th century also, from the period between the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 and the French Revolution, a period when the European nations, exhausted by Continental wars and reserving their energies for colonial adventures, were content with a diplomacy of limited and negotiable objectives.

In vindicating his 18th century model of diplomacy, Professor Butterfield necessarily has to minimise the novel character of the Communist threat and deny that a war of righteousness against it could be either moral or effective. Here his arguments have a more conventionally neutralist character. The rapid increase of the power of a country like Russia is a proper matter for concern, but not the spread of Communism. "Many of the evils that we hate in the Soviet system are in fact not connected with the Communist ideal at all, but are rather organic to the phenomenon of revolution as such." When an order has broken down, as in the Russia of 1917, or "once the terrible smear of war has passed over society (as in much of eastern Europe in the 1940's)—the evils and horrors are going to be unavoidable in any case, so that Communism may have a special function to perform, since it is clear that a liberal system cannot stand on its feet in such emergency conditions."

If Russia has taken away the independence of its satellites, so, according to Professor Butterfield, has the United States. "We should be able to tell whether Italy was a satellite or not at the present day if we knew that any American interference would prevent her adopting Communism if she desired it." If it is argued that Communist parties are minority, conspiratorial parties, it must be remembered that "the so-called liberal insurrections of the 19th century could not have taken place without British example or French propaganda, without nests of international revolution, without all the devices of the modern agitator." And the bourgeois leaders of these revolutions made promises to the masses which they could not—or did not intend to—fulfill. The doctrine that only the Anglo-Saxon type of democracy is conducive to peace and is to be tolerated in the world "would not only be based on an untruth, but would be indistinguishable from a project of Anglo-American domination."

Professor Butterfield disagrees with Communist theory, dislikes Communist practices, and would far prefer to see colonial peoples adopt the British system rather than the Russian. But the striking thing about his conservatism is that it would conserve Communism also. The continuance of Communism he sees as preferable to the consequences of the attempt to wipe it out. The ultimate potentialities for good or evil in Communism we cannot judge, but we, Professor Butterfield thinks, can learn to live with it as a system. The situation will presumably then be like that which men had to accept after the inconclusive wars of religion between Christians and Moslems, and later between Protestants and Catholics.

As his use of this analogy implies, Professor Butterfield is as modest in his expectations of the world triumph of institutional Christianity as he is of the world triumph of Anglo-Saxon democracy. This is the realistic judgement of a historian who has looked carefully at the record. What is surprising, however, is that the

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inner possibilities of Christianity are treated with similar restraint. Despite some references to love and salvation and the ultimacy of the individual, one gets on the whole the impression that Christianity as a form of belief is "superior" to others chiefly because it gives a sober view of man's limitations. There is little sense in *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* of the drama of the individual Christian life, of the depths of personality it reveals, or the moments it may provide of joy and creativity and certitude. Nor does Professor Butterfield do justice to the difficulties that occur in politics and diplomacy because men's sense of themselves is so much identified with ideas and institutions.

In a way, the absence of these considerations is more disturbing than Professor Butterfield's political contentions. No matter how arguable some of his interpretations of Communism may be, his historically based warnings have to be taken with the utmost seriousness. One feels, however, that Professor Butterfield wants to return not only to 18th century principles of diplomacy, but to other 18th century rationalities and simplifications as well. These may indeed be necessary if such diplomacy is to be practised, but it seems hardly possible to go back this way in history even if it were desirable. We are too much the heirs of the 19th century, both for good and for bad. The fearful lessons of the past twenty years are forcing us to try to bring the knowledge and complexity and power which that century bequeathed us under the control of a more traditional wisdom. This is not easy, especially in the prevailing mood, with all the incitements to recklessness and finalism that world instability offers. A great deal of spiritual strength is required. What one does not find in *Christianity, Diplomacy and War* are indications of sources of such strength, which would enable us to practise the restraint and self-criticism which Professor Butterfield requires, and at the same time effectively oppose and "contain" Marxism in the realm of ideas and the spirit. If the spiritual resources of the West are no greater than Professor Butterfield suggests, and if the moral balance between democracy and Communism is as nearly even as he has been led to describe it in his opposition to anti-Communist crusades, it is hard to see how such containment can occur.

Robert Gorham Davis

POETS AND POLITICS

I HAVE heard a teacher tell his students: The great seers of the past offer you more than the glib sociologists of our own day. Read Plato. Read the ancient historians. Read Burke, Tocqueville, Coleridge. Read Burckhardt and Nietzsche. Do not waste your time on those political scientists who understand everything and move nothing. Only great men should be allowed to write about great and terrible things; when it comes to the fate of man and society, the author's whole self, his character, his poetical essence carry more weight than his mere intelligence. . . .

I thought of his words when I took up Mr. R. J. White's fine new edition of the political tracts of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley.* Here, three great poets write about the crisis of their times. They do so with earnestness and passion. What they have to say is of great interest for the historian of ideas who traces Rousseau's influence on Wordsworth, or Hooker's on Coleridge. It is fascinating for the student of the Napoleonic wars and of the tensions and disillusions that followed Waterloo. Is it also contemporary in a narrower sense? That is, could these essays, with a few cuts, be printed in one of our more serious reviews, as if written for our times and all time?

So far as Shelley is concerned, the answer must, I think, be "No." To be sure, "A Defence of Poetry" deserves its fame. Its variations turn around the theme which is also so near to the centre of Coleridge's thought: the dangerous discrepancies between material progress, progress in science, in "understanding," and the stagnation, or decay, of our moral, imaginative, "poetical" faculties. Here,

* *Political Tracts of Wordsworth, Coleridge and Shelley*. Edited, with an introduction, by R. J. WHITE. Cambridge University Press. 30s.

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Shelley's formulations are even more striking than Coleridge's and almost as good as Kant's. ("The cultivation of poetry is never more to be desired than at periods when, from an excess of selfish and calculating principle, the accumulation of the materials of external life exceed the quantity of the power of assimilating them to the internal laws of human nature. . . .") "A Defence of Poetry," however, can hardly be called a "political tract." "A Philosophical View of Reform" can; and it is very, very youthful. It is Tom Paine plus a little poetry. When one, on the first page, finds the Roman Empire described as "a vast and successful scheme for the enslavement of the more civilised portion of mankind," while a few lines below the Catholic Church is being unmasked as a "plan according to which the cunning and selfish few have employed the fears and hopes of the ignorant many to the establishment of their own power"—one is pretty much tempted to smile avuncularly and not read any further. Professor White makes a case for Shelley's statesman-like caution, and there is something to that: although kings are to this poet "nothing but privileged murderers and robbers," he warns against the premature establishment of a republic because he hates civil war. Coming from a disgruntled young equalitarian, that may be called moderation.

WORDSWORTH'S "Convention of Cintra," a rich and weird political pamphlet, was provoked by a now forgotten episode of the Peninsular War. In 1808, the French were forced to evacuate Portugal, or rather, were allowed to evacuate it; for they were brought back to France in British ships with all their equipment and loot, while, critics held, it would have been possible to force them into unconditional surrender. In this transaction among generals, Wordsworth's poetic hysteria sensed a sort of "Munich," an act of most unnecessary appeasement and unprincipled treachery. It made him see, in a flash, all the dreary difference between politics as they should have been and politics as they were. The poet lived in a world of absolutes: the British generals who had signed the convention were opportunists who did not even understand the war they were fighting, Napoleon was "the enemy of mankind," France a barbarised nation with the means of modern science at her disposal; against such an enemy, England and Spain were fighting, not for the reconquest of any one country, but for "the security and happiness of the ages; not for an insulated privilege, but for the rights of human nature; not for temporal blessings, but for eternal happiness; not for the benefit of one nation, but for mankind. . . ." There could be no compromise in this fight, least of all a compromise in which Napoleon was referred to as His Imperial Majesty while the Portuguese government-in-exile was not even mentioned.

How should one read an essay like the "Convention of Cintra"? Shall we watch the puzzling contradictions in which the intellectual is caught because he confuses his own world of absolutes with the real world of politics and strategy? Or should we understand Wordsworth in his own terms—that is, was he right and was the war against Napoleon truly a clash between principles, marred only, and avoidably, by human shortcomings? This, of course, is the question of questions. It probably can never be neatly answered; but it must be asked.

Aptly, Mr. White calls the "Convention of Cintra" a "treatise on the springs of social union." There is a good deal of vigorous thinking in the pamphlet; as when Wordsworth analyses the notions of courage and hope which help to create a living community while the mere longing for safety must lead to its decay. Nor are shrewd concrete observations lacking. The "treason" of Cintra, Wordsworth holds, is partly due to the fact that British generals tend to become political, which soldiers never must; and they become political because their enemies, the Jacobin-Napoleonic generals, are soldiers and ruthless politicians in one. "Belligerents exchange characteristics," as the German historian, Treitschke, later observed.

Truth, on the other hand, has something to do with simplicity; and Wordsworth's equations are often desperately complicated. We are fighting for the good cause of freedom; but our temporary allies who have also been fighting against Satan—Russia, Austria, Prussia—are neither free nor good. Nor is anti-Napoleonic Spain entirely good: she must and will reform herself while carrying on the war against her conqueror, and must reform herself in such a way as not to destroy the continuity of her history. As for Britain,

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her government is still, in principle, the same which began an unjust and unnecessary war against France in 1793; for at that time it was revolutionary France that fought for freedom —though just when mankind's good cause ceased to be represented by France and found a not yet quite secure refuge in the opposite camp, could be only approximately stated. . . . Well-known, eternal vacillations. Facts are equated with principles. The dialectic which bridges the two spheres is everywhere burdened with dead weights under which it would collapse if it came to a real test—if the poet were allowed to run the Foreign Office, for instance.

MR. WHITE, in his introduction, reminds us that Coleridge was more cautious in judging the philosophical standing of the enemy. "It is bad policy," Coleridge writes, ". . . to represent a political system as having no charm but for robbers and assassins, and no natural origin but in the brains of fools or madmen, when experience has proved that the great danger of the system consists in the peculiar fascination it is calculated to exert on noble and imaginative spirits. . . . Let it be remembered by both parties, and indeed by controversialists on all subjects, that every speculative error which boasts a multitude of advocates has its golden as well as its dark sides; that there is always some truth connected with it. . . ."

In Coleridge's political writing we strike solid gold. What beautiful fairness and circumspection, what moving good will! What keen insight into the mechanism of politics and, even more so, of economics! And what uncanny timeliness! Reading the "Statesman's Manual" or the second "Lay Sermon," one realises how old Western man's modern fears and worries really are, and how little that is new the last hundred and fifty years have added—they have only made visible to all of us what the prophets could see in the beginning. Coleridge identifies the evil of Positivism before that term itself was ever used. He knows that the human problem is spiritual, that the positivistic separation between "political science," philosophy, and religion is disastrously false. Deeply religious, he is at the same time shrewd enough to suspect the motives behind a certain neo-religiousness which began to thrive during and after the French Revolution. "Open infidelity has ceased to be a means even of gratifying vanity; for the leaders of the gang themselves turned apostates to Satan, as soon as the numbers of their proselytes became so large, that atheism ceased to give distinction. Nay, it became a mark of original thinking to defend the Belief of the Ten Commandments. . . ." Or: "The notion of our measureless superiority in good sense to our ancestors, so general at the commencement of the French Revolution and for some years before it, is out of fashion." When was that written? In 1816? In 1953? And: "No cement can keep together pious conclusions and atheistic premises." Who was the John Dewey who had to be reminded of this, in 1817? Yet the fighter against the intellectual "Left" is at the same time distrustful of a certain "Right": "Among men of influence and property, we have now more reason to apprehend the stupor of despondence than the extravagances of hope. . . . In this rank of life the danger lies, not in any tendency to innovation, but in the choice of the means for preventing it."

It does well these days to listen to the ancient voice of a reasonable man, the timeless voice of reason. The belief in reason, ideas, "antecedent knowledge," is, of course, the core of Coleridge's political philosophy. Reason he finds in history—not in the optimistic, Hegelian sense, but as the eternally recurrent, the lawful, on which predictions can be based. He never ceases to brood over the two great historical lessons of his epoch: Jacobinism and Napoleon. They are unique, incomparable events but they are lessons too or how else could they carry any meaning? A deeper truth can be read in history's chaotic agitations; man reaps what he sows. Coleridge exhorts us to read Thucydides, Tacitus, Machiavelli, rather than Hume; and he finds in the Bible "the only science of realities."

THERE would be not much point in arguing whether Coleridge is a genuine conservative, and why, and in to what extent. As a political party is not just one thing but many, and is a bundle of divergent interests and a nest of contradictions; a single mind, too, will be the scene of many intellectual battles. Living men are not ideas taken from textbooks, nor combinations of them. To classify Coleridge as a social conservative, a romantic, an aristo-

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cratic socialist, etc., would help us very little in putting his spiritual energies to good use. A conservative he is indeed; for he loves the past and its legacies, and fervently believes in the solidarity of all generations, past, present, and future. At the same time he is no mere defender of the old order. Against the economists' saying that "things always find their level" he argues that men are not things and that the harm done to bodies and souls by an economic depression cannot be undone by a rising business cycle. Marx, thirty years later, had his say about this problem, "things" versus "men"; but Coleridge's description of the ravages of the Industrial Revolution is far more human and moving than *The Critique of Political Economy* or Engels' *Condition of the Working Classes in England*. As for the spreading of literacy and learning, he is not entirely happy about it, but believes that once we have gone so far we must go further; what has become too general to prevent, must become universal to heal.

It is, however, this complex of questions—education, learning, culture, classes—which Coleridge does not really master. Here, the main stream of history has been against him, and was against him even while he wrote. The belief in the necessity of classes, of a not merely economic but also social and cultural stratification, has been said to be the Alpha and Omega of conservatism. It certainly is of vital importance to Coleridge who addresses his "Statesman's Manual" to the "higher classes of society" and his second "Lay Sermon" to "the higher and middle classes." He wants to know to whom he talks; in this case, to a well circumscribed class of society, and not to a general, anonymous "public," the very notion of which he abhors. Although dealing with "distresses and discontents" which are those of the broad masses, he refuses to talk to them; for their horizon is limited and should remain so. A "plebeification of science" will not save us; "from a popular philosophy and a philosophic populace, good sense deliver us!" He vituperates against the "circulating libraries."

What would he say of television? What would our classless, industrial, magazine-reading society, our American, British, or German public do with a book addressed to "the higher and the middle classes?" Conservatism has fought a losing battle all the time, from Coleridge to T. S. Eliot; it wanted to save a culture based on classes but all it could do was to make us conscious of its loss.

Golo Mann

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ABOUT OUR AUTHORS

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• RAJA RAO, one of India's leading writers, composed his short story—really an Indian philosophical allegory, he tells us—in this number while visiting his home at Trivandrum, Travancore. The Paris setting is explained by his having lived in that city for many years. Perhaps the best known of his novels is *Kanthapura*, published in 1938 and translated into many languages.

• GOLO MANN, born in Germany, now professor of history at Claremont Teachers' College in California, is at present in Europe on a Guggenheim fellowship. During the war, he did a considerable amount of broadcasting for the B.B.C.

• MELVIN J. LASKY was born in the United States and is now editor of the distinguished Berlin monthly, *Der Monat*. During his trip to Asia, reporters were much struck by the fact that this German editor spoke English with an American instead of a German accent.

• SIR HERBERT READ's reflections on the Zeitgeist are based on his remarks to the IVth International Congress of Art Critics in Dublin last summer.

• ERIC DA COSTA, who contributes a "Letter from New Delhi," is the editor of *The Eastern Economist*.

• ROSE MACAULAY's essay forms part of her book, *Pleasure of Ruins*, which Weidenfeld & Nicolson will publish later this month.

• The complete and definitive edition of W. B. Yeats's letters, under the editorship of Allen Wade, will be published by Rupert Hart-Davies sometime next year.

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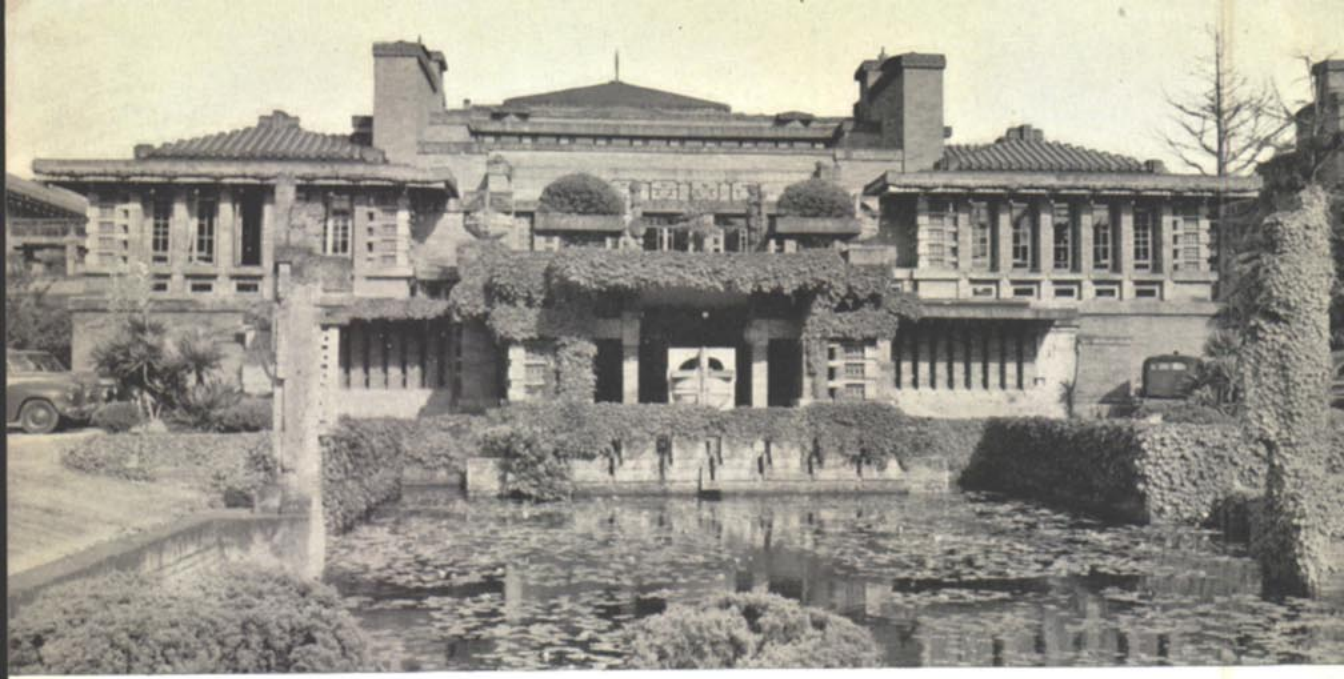

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